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FRENCH'S ACTING EDITION

WHAT WOULD A GENTLEMAN DO?

(GILBERT DAYLE.)

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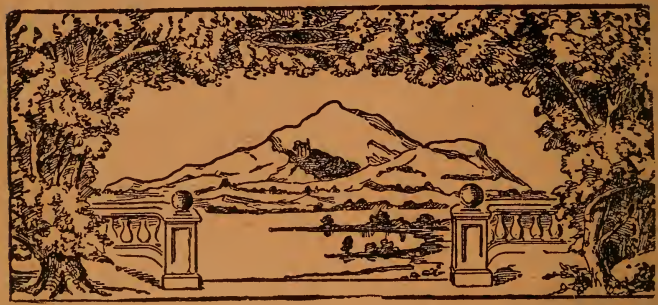

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"WHAT WOULD A GENTLEMAN DO?"

By Gilbert Dayle

Produced at the Apollo Theatre, London, September 20, 1902.

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" There can surely be no mistake about Saturday night's audience in the Apollo Theatre. Spontaneous enthusiasm possessed it, and Mr. Tom B. Davis has begun his newest management with a brilliant success."—*Financial News.*

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WHAT WOULD A GENTLEMAN DO?

AN ORIGINAL THREE-ACT PLAY

By

GILBERT DAYLE

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"WHAT WOULD A GENTLEMAN DO?"

Produced on September 20th, 1902, *at the Apollo Theatre, London with the following Cast:—*

Colonel Sir Bruce Kederby C.B., V.C.	Retired.	*Mr. J. H. Barnes.*
Madge Kederby	His daughter.	*Miss Nina Boucicault.*
Hartley Quayne	A Solicitor.	*Mr. Charles Garry.*
Sir Christopher Wynne.		*Mr. Frank Mills.*
Lady Nora Hervey . . .	Friends of the Kederbys.	*Miss Spencer Brunton.*
Dolly Banter .		*Miss Beatrice Ferrar.*
Ronald Kederby	Sir Bruce's son.	*Mr. Barrington Foote.*
Miss Agatha Kederby.	His sister.	*Miss Marie Illington.*
Rodd	Servant at the Grange.	*Mr. Fred. Emney.*
Geoffrey Seaton		*Mr. Dennis Eadie.*
	and	
Dickie Hook .		*Mr. W. Louis Bradfield.*

SCENERY

Act I.

Morning room at Barstone Grange. Morning.

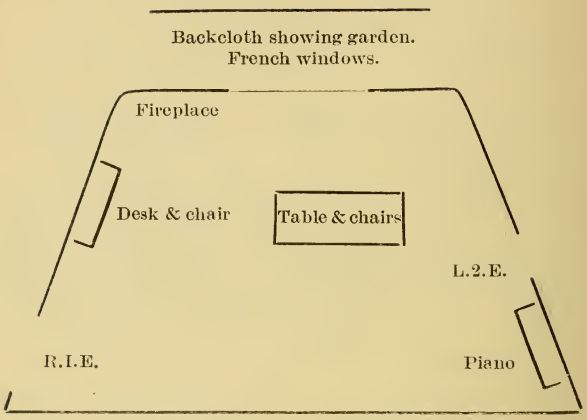
Act II.

Conservatory at Barstone Grange. Evening.

Act III.

Same as Act I. 3 *months later.* Morning.

Time: *The Present.*



Morning Room at Barstone Grange.

"WHAT WOULD A GENTLEMAN DO?"

ACT I

SCENE.—*Morning room of Barstone Grange, the country residence of Colonel Sir Bruce Kederby. It is a well-furnished room with several Indian curios about. Wide French windows open on to the garden up stage* L. *and handsome doorways form* L.2.E. *and* R.I.E. *The fireplace is in the corner of the room up stage* R., *and a piano stands against the wall down stage* L. *On the wall over the fireplace is a large framed picture of Madge Kederby, and above it a sword with scabbard. In the centre of the room is a small square table on which is standing a large bowl of flowers, red and white. Flowers of the same colour are also about the room in profusion. Against the wall* R. *is a large writing desk with chair before it.*

(*The curtain rises on an empty stage. Almost immediately* RODD *enters* L.2.E., *ushering in* QUAYNE. RODD *is an upright old man with grizzled grey hair, and an artificial leg, which causes him to walk stiffly. He is a veteran soldier turned servant in his Colonel's employ. He wears a red and white buttonhole, and has three medals pinned to his breast.* QUAYNE *is a well-dressed smart-looking man of about thirty-five.*)

RODD. This way, sir.

QUAYNE (*crossing table* C. *and taking off his gloves*). Well, Rodd, and how do you find yourself?

RODD (*facing* QUAYNE, *thumping his chest and drawing himself up*). Never better, sir—bar, o' course, the leg. As full of fire as the day I followed the Colonel to Vallapore, and he led us 'ome. (*Waving his arm impressively.*) Twenty-five years ago to-day, sir, and both me and the Colonel alive to tell the tale. Twenty-five years, sir.

QUAYNE (*smiling*). Ah, of course—it's the anniversary of Vallapore. (*Sitting* R. *of table, indicating flowers on the table.*) Some one who remembered sent these to him?

RODD (*scornfully*). Some one who remembered! Remember Vallapore in this house—where I am? No, sir, the day the Colonel carved 'is page on 'Istory, and won 'is V.C., ain't likely to be forgotten whilst I'm about, and Miss Madge, bless 'er, don't want any reminding. She alwus decorates the place with his favourite flowers, and she was down early this morning seein' to them. (*Looks lovingly at his own buttonhole.*) And she gave me these with 'er own dainty little 'ands and says, "Rodd, you were there too," and I said, "And a thundering good job for some of 'em that I was, miss." (*Nods his head knowingly and chuckles, suddenly looking up.*) Ah, you want to see the Colonel—of course! (*He marches across and fetches morning paper, and returns with it to* QUAYNE.)

(QUAYNE *has dropped into a chair by the table.*)

He won't be more than a minute—I'll fetch him, sir, I'll fetch him.

(*He turns and stumps jauntily round the table towards French windows. A few feet from the windows he suddenly lunges his leg forward and does a few strokes with an imaginary sword.* QUAYNE *looks round, whereupon* RODD *hastily recovers himself, saying hurriedly, "Pardon, sir, pardon—twenty-five years ago to-day," then resumes his walk to the windows.*

As he gains the path the Colonel *appears on it, and sees* Quayne *in room.*)

(Rodd *stands at the salute till his master passes, then pulls out his red silk handkerchief and, nodding admiringly at the* Colonel's *back, waves it triumphantly and disappears along the path.*)

(*The* Colonel *is a spruce-looking elderly man with close-cropped white hair; he is attired in light summer suit, and wears a flower of the prevailing colour. He enters the room.*)

Colonel (*looking at his watch.*) My dear Quayne, the last stroke has scarcely died away. (*Shaking hands.*) I couldn't keep an appointment so punctually to save my life.

Quayne (*smiling*). There was just one you kept, Sir Bruce, was there not?

Colonel. Can't recall it.

Quayne. I think you made it early in the morning of a day, just twenty-five years ago. You sent a message saying that at eight o'clock that evening you would join the officers of the besieged garrison at Vallapore—how you kept that appointment is, I believe, fairly well known.

Colonel (*going up* L.C.). Ah, that rascal, Rodd, has been at it again. Every anniversary it's the same—it's Vallapore with him all day long. He wears his medals, and thinks and babbles over it from the moment he comes down sober in the morning till the inordinately late hour at which he goes drunk to bed at night. And I can't cure him of it.

Quayne. It's a thing an Englishman rather likes to remember.

Colonel (*at top of table* C.). It's devilish embarrassing to have such an enthusiast about the place. Why, last year we had a crowd here, and before the afternoon, do what I could to keep him quiet, the

ruffian had the whole lot of 'em talking Vallapore—until at last some one made the atrocious remark that it never rained but it Vallapored.

(Quayne *laughs;* Colonel *seats himself at table and assumes a business-like air.*)

(*With a sigh.*) Well, what's the latest? I suppose you have some more bad news.

Quayne (*sitting down opposite*). I'm afraid it isn't very cheerful. As I predicted, you will have to throw still more good money after bad—in short, you have to pay the full liability of the shares you took in the Company.

Colonel (*nodding*). How much does it tot up to?

Quayne (*showing him the notice*). Five thousand odd.

Colonel (*turning away bitterly*). Good Lord! (*He gets up and stares despondently round the room—after a pause*). Yes, there's no help for it this time—the place will have to go. (*Sighs and remains buried in thought for a moment, then rouses himself and turns abruptly to* Quayne.) There's a terrible lot of truth in that little remark about the "Shoemaker sticking to his last," Quayne. If, when I retired, I had let my private capital remain in Consols, instead of being persuaded by Graham to invest the whole of it in his confounded steel company, I shouldn't have been in the mess I am now. (*Up* L.C.)

Quayne. It certainly was a most unfortunate speculation.

Colonel (*coming down* L. *of table*). Unfortunate! It was the worst thing I've ever done in my life. In six months every penny has been drained out of me, and I've had a hard struggle to keep my head above water and, as you know, Quayne, I've had to sacrifice my pride considerably.

Quayne. You are referring to Mr. Hook?

(Colonel *nods.*)

Oh, there is really nothing in that, Sir Bruce. It's merely a matter of convenience to both parties. On one side, a good-looking young man of little birth or education, who has suddenly sprung into a large fortune, who is socially ambitious, and who is willing to pay heavily for any chance of improving his position. On the other side——

Colonel. Sir Bruce Kederby, who, little as people suspect it, is practically ruined, sooner than go under at once, he accepts the unutterable bounder's terms and has him to live with him as a friend and introduce him in that character to his neighbours. Quayne, I have despised myself for doing it every moment since, and if it hadn't been to keep the Grange for Madge and the boy in the army, I would have gone to the gutter first. (*Down* L. *and back.*)

Quayne (*cheerfully*). I don't think you ought to look at it in that light, Sir Bruce. Why, quite a lot of people do that sort of thing nowadays.

Colonel (*grimly*). Hitherto the Kederbys have refrained from the amusement. (*Bitterly.*) And, after all, it has been no use. This final five thousand pounds will be totally impossible to find. The place'll have to go!

Quayne. Have you no relatives—or friends?

Colonel (*firmly*). None, none to whom I would go, Quayne. No, there is no help for it.

Quayne (*with a sigh*). It's a pity. (*Rises.*)

Colonel. Yes, it's always a pity when one's ruined. I don't mind myself so much—it's——

(Madge's *voice is heard outside on path, laughing.* Colonel *puts a finger to his lips.* Madge *enters through windows. She is a pretty girl of about twenty, attired in a white summer dress and a sun hat. She crosses to* Quayne.)

Madge (*shaking hands with him*). Good-morning,

Mr. Quayne. Have you been trying to make father a business man?

Colonel. That would be an impossible feat, my dear! (*Half aside.*) My own efforts in that direction have had somewhat poor results.

Quayne. And what have you been doing, Miss Madge?

Madge (*laughing*). I promised to teach Mr. Hook how to play tennis. This is his third lesson, and he beat his instructor.

(Hook *appears at windows. He is a man of about twenty-four, attired in a light flannel suit. In his buttonhole he wears a red and white flower. A straw hat and a tennis racquet complete his outfit. His whole appearance is suggestive of a bounderish type. He looks fairly well, but when excited, attends to his H's with an effort. He comes into the room mopping his forehead.*)

Hook. Hullo, Quayne, how are you? (*Shakes hands with him, then drops into a chair.*) I've had a hot half hour tennis playing with Miss Madge—but it's all right—I'm through with it—I'm a tennis player—the real article, eh, Miss Madge?

Madge (*smiling*). You've certainly beaten me, but then there are others far better, you know.

Colonel. Miss Dolly Banter, for example.

Hook (*springing to his feet, waving his racquet*). Bring 'em along, Hook's ready to meet all comers. (*Makes a cut at an imaginary ball.*) How's that for a volley?

Quayne. Magnificent! You'd get six for a lost ball, I should say.

(Madge *has crossed to* Colonel *and they have been talking together, he with his arm affectionately round her waist.* Rodd *appears on path and marches jauntily into room. Draws himself up to stiff attention before the* Colonel *and salutes.*)

Colonel (*sitting down* L.). Well, what is it, Rodd?

Rodd (L.C.). The vicarage orderly, sir, has brought a message, which he wishes to deliver personally to you. He would not entrust it to the Intelligence Department. (*Indicating himself.*)

Madge. I thought you were generally the commissariat officer, Rodd?

Rodd. I'm everything to-day, miss. And I would call to mind that on that day of days, miss, twenty-five——

Colonel (*stopping him with a gesture*). That will do, please, Rodd. Where is the vicarage man?

Rodd. Within the lines—just on the lawn. The Intelligence Department has a shrewd inkling that "flowers for the church" is at the bottom of his manœuvres.

Colonel (*laughing*). All right, Rodd, then you had better come too, Madge.

(*Bus.* Rodd, *he salutes and marches away.* Colonel *looks after him and shakes his head.*)

He's got it worse than ever to-day.

Madge (*slipping her arm through her father's*). I'm glad he has, and I just love him for it. (*Giving his arm a hug.*) Oh, if you only knew how proud I am of you.

(Colonel *bends down and kisses her on the forehead, then looks towards* Quayne *and* Hook, *who are chatting together at table.*)

Colonel. I'll be back in a minute, Quayne. You will be able to entertain yourself with your other client, I know.

Quayne (*taking a step or so towards them*). Certainly, Sir Bruce. Please don't hurry.

(Colonel *and* Madge *exit through windows and along path.*)

Hook *goes to window and watches* Madge *disappear.*

Quayne *turning, sees* Hook *still staring along the path.* Hook *comes slowly down stage to table.*)

Quayne. Well, Mr. Hook, are you satisfied with your bargain?

Hook (*looking round thoughtfully in direction* Madge *has gone, then suddenly rousing himself*). Satisfied—I should just think I was, about! Quayne, it's been a glorious success. I can never thank you enough for thinking of the idea, and arranging for me to come here. It was the finishing touch I wanted.

Quayne. Your ambitions, then, are gratified?

Hook. No, they ain't; they're only just beginning. But before I make a start, I had to be a gentleman—and that meant hard work.

Quayne (*dryly*). It always is a somewhat difficult proceeding.

Hook. Yes, but I'm through with it now; and Richard Hook, Esquire, will pass muster with most gentlemen in the land. (*Facing* Quayne.) You know what I was when your agent hunted me out in Melbourne, and told me I'd been left a pile.

Quayne. I only remember it was honest employment.

Hook. Yes, honest; but low down—precious low down in the scale. And now here I am, enjoying my money, mixing with a real good set. Some of 'em in my shoes would have kept low, and flashed their money away. But I knew better; I made up my mind to be a gentleman, and I've done it. (*Rising, crossing* L.)

Quayne. You certainly acted very wisely.

Hook (*down* L.). I didn't know how to behave—what good class people do, and what they don't. But it can be all found out by observation. I watched 'em, and soon fell into it myself. What's the result—Sir Bruce takes me everywhere and introduces me as his friend, and I can tell from his manner he isn't ashamed of me—he likes doing it.

QUAYNE. I am glad you are satisfied.

HOOK. Of course, he'd do it anyhow—it's our bargain, and he's paid for it. But what pleases me is to feel it isn't a trial to him. It makes me sure of my feet, and if anything does crop up and I'm not quite certain, well, I've always got this with me. (*Draws a little thin book from his pocket.*)

QUAYNE. Why, what is it?

HOOK. Don't you know? (*Holding it up.*) *The Complete Gentleman;* it tells you everything—from what to do with finger glasses at dinner down to how to chat at a funeral. It's just splendid; any one who read it through couldn't help being a gentleman—no matter what he was when he started.

QUAYNE. A marvellous little book, it puts gentility within reach of us all.

HOOK (*dropping into a chair, in self-satisfied tones*). I wouldn't be without it for a fortune—it's made my life happy.

QUAYNE. Have you made any more plans, Mr. Hook?

HOOK. I shall stop here. I'm very comfortable, and it suits me. I'm making heaps of friends, and being asked everywhere. I'm expanding, Quayne. (*Putting book in pocket.*)

QUAYNE (*looking at him narrowly*). In the course of that expansion, is it possible you will marry?

HOOK. Shouldn't wonder, Quayne, shouldn't wonder. How much am I worth? (*Crossing his legs.*)

QUAYNE. Something a little over two hundred thousand pounds.

HOOK. That's a lot of money, ain't it? And it's all solid—all there—good stuff?

QUAYNE. Government securities.

HOOK (*rises*). Well, look here, I could afford to marry a lady, couldn't I? A real lady.

QUAYNE (*smiling*). Yes, even a real lady.

HOOK (*gets up and lays a hand on the* SOLICITOR'S *shoulder*). Then I shouldn't be astonished, Quayne,

if you heard of my being engaged to a real lady—the realest little lady going.

(*Enter* Madge *and* Colonel R.I.E.)

Madge (*crossing to* Quayne). You ought to see our flowers, Mr. Quayne—they're lovely just now.

Quayne (*taking up his gloves*). Thank you, but I'm afraid I must be going, Miss Madge.

Colonel. I thought you would stay to lunch, Quayne; we are expecting the boy at any moment.

Quayne. I ought to be getting back, Sir Bruce.

Colonel. Well, anyway, come for a stroll with me first. I haven't finished my talk with you.

Quayne (*walking towards windows, joining* Colonel). Delighted, Sir Bruce.

(*Exit together along path.*)

Madge (*looking after* Colonel *admiringly—to* Hook). Don't you think my father one of the nicest men in the world, Mr. Hook? (*Going to piano.*)

Hook (*nodding*). A real good sort, Miss Madge—a man you'd go through fire and water for, and be very glad to do it.

Madge (*enthusiastically, down to piano* L.). Like Rodd says the men of the 21st Hussars were ready to do at Vallapore.

(*She sits on music stool down stage* L. Hook *is standing a few feet away, his hands in his pockets, surveying her back. She turns round to him.*)

All the Kederbys have been soldiers, Mr. Hook.

Hook (R.C., *slowly*). You think it the only profession for a man?

Madge (*looking at the photograph of a young man above the piano*). I don't know that I——

Hook. I suppose the man you marry will have to be one?

Madge (*taking the frame and wiping a speck from the glass with her handkerchief, bending over it*). I

don't think I am so bigotted as that. If I really loved a man, I should not mind what he was. (*She is looking at the piano intently.*)

(*A quick eager look comes over* HOOK'S *face; he makes a movement as if to suddenly speak, then turns the other way with a gesture—as if he can find no words.* MADGE *half glances over her shoulder, sees* HOOK'S *back turned to her, then gently kisses the photograph and puts it back on the piano. She lets her hands stray over the piano, plays a bar or two, then suddenly swings round on the music stool.*)

(*Seated at piano.*) It is nice to think Ronald has got a whole week's leave; I do hope he will come soon. I have been counting the hours ever since we heard.

HOOK. I suppose you are very proud of him?

MADGE. Proud of Ronald, I should think we were! I, Rodd, and father most of all. He's only a subaltern, not but that he's going to be at the top of the tree. He's ever so clever.

HOOK (*shaking his head*). That's against him—in the army.

(RODD *enters excitedly* C. *from* L.)

RODD (*up* L.C.). Pardon, Miss Madge—must tell you—Mr. Ronald is coming up the path. (*Marches excitedly towards windows, swinging round.*) And he's getting to look, miss, just like his blessed father did when I first noo 'im.

(MADGE *slips off seat and runs towards the window.*)

Here 'e is, miss, 'ome on Anniversary Day, too! Hip, hip——

(*Brings out his red handkerchief to wave, but crams it back hastily and assumes a stiff attitude with hand at the salute, as* RONALD KEDERBY *enters. He is a young fellow of about twenty, attired in tweed suit, somewhat pale.*)

Ronald (*kissing* Madge). Well, little girl, how are you? Hullo, Hook? And old Rodd, too! (*Shaking him by the hand.*) I see you've got 'em all on again. (*Pointing to medals.*)

Rodd. Day of days, sir.

(Ronald *nods.*)

'Ope you'll have a good collection yourself, sir, before long.

(*Exit through windows.*)

Madge. Ronald, is anything the matter? How worried you look.

Ronald (*shaking his head and forcing a smile*). I did not sleep very well last night—it's nothing. And how have you been getting on, Hook? (*Shakes hands with him.*)

Hook. Oh, I've done a little bit of everything, and done it well since I saw you last.

Madge. Did you see father as you came through the garden, Ronald?

Ronald. No, dear.

Madge (*going up stage*). I'll run out and tell him —he'll want to see you at once.

Ronald (*going up stage too*). I'll come along with you, or rather, I'll follow you in a minute—I just want to speak to Hook.

(*She takes a flower from her belt and puts it in his coat; he kisses her and she runs off laughing.*)

(*He watches her disappear, then turns and strides down stage—his expression has changed—he is pale and anxious.*)

(*Blurting the words out.*) There is no time to lose—I want to know, Hook, if you'll do me a favour? (*Sits* L. *of table.*)

Hook. Of course. Out with it.

(RONALD *sitting down* L. *side of table with bowed head.* HOOK *is watching him other end.*)

RONALD. I'm in a horrible mess, Hook, and I've got to bolt.

HOOK. As bad as that? (*Walking to mantelpiece.*)

RONALD. Yes, as bad as that! I felt I must just come down to see them once before I left—I'm not going back to the regiment. What I want you to do is to break it gently to them after I've gone. Tell them the reason. You'll do it?

HOOK. Yes, but what's the trouble—money?

RONALD. Yes, the usual kind—oh, I've been an awful fool, Hook.

HOOK. I know that—blurt it out!

RONALD. It started some time ago when I got leave, and instead of coming home I went up to town. I got into a quick set and started card playing. The usual thing, I was young, inexperienced; they made it their life. I lost more money than I could pay, and gave a bill. I went on trying to pull back my losses, and got deeper in still. Now there's a bill with my name to it out, for quite a hopeless amount —and they're pressing for payment.

HOOK. And you think making a bolt is the easiest way out?

RONALD. What else can I do? You know the governor has no money, or else——

HOOK (*sits* R. *table*). Else I shouldn't be here? I understand. Go on.

RONALD. He's already given me every penny he can spare and more, bless him! It would be quite impossible for him to find this money. And I won't ask him. Directly it gets to the Colonel's ears, I shall be kicked out of the regiment. It's better to leave than be kicked out!

HOOK. I suppose it is; what do you intend to do?

RONALD. Oh, I don't know—get right away—

make a clean start! Oh, my God, Hook, it will break the governor's heart—and little Madge's.

Hook (*watching him thoughtfully, rising and going up* R.) Yes, it'll break her heart sure enough!

Ronald. Still there's no other way. I must go, and you'll tell 'em as gently as possible? (*Utters a sob, brushes his hand across his eyes shamefacedly, to* Hook.) I'm not thinking so much of myself as the governor and——

Hook (*thoughtfully*). Yes, yes! (*Looking up abruptly.*) How much is it?

Ronald. Close on a thousand in all.

(*He sinks down into a chair again, and buries his face in an attitude of despair.* Hook *crosses quietly to desk* R., *and sitting down before it takes up pen. He pulls out his cheque book and writes cheque; then gets up and crosses to* Ronald, *behind table.*)

Hook. Seems a bit of a pity you should bolt; it isn't altogether necessary, is it?

(*Touches him on the shoulder.* Ronald *looks up, mechanically takes the cheque* Hook *presses into his hand.* Hook *sits* R. *of table, picks up paper.*)

Ronald (*springing up*). What's this, Hook?

Hook (*gruffly*). I don't like the job of breaking bad news. Let me off with this instead!

Ronald. It's awfully good of you; but I can't take it from you.

Hook (*with assumed fierceness*). Why not, is it because you don't think I am a gentleman?

Ronald. No, no, of course not! I can't, because—I have no chance of paying it back—because—well, I've been a fool, and ought to suffer for it. (*Goes* L.)

Hook. But ought the others to suffer too? Think of Sir Bruce—think of what your career means to him—think of Madge. It isn't much use breaking her heart, is it?

Ronald (*goes* L. *a little*). I can't! It isn't right when I can't pay it back.

Hook (*fiercely*). I don't want it back, hang you!

(*Pauses—softly*—Madge's *voice heard off* R.)

For her sake!

(Hook *holds out hand*, Ronald *suddenly springs up and takes it.*)

Ronald. God bless you, Hook!

Hook. She is never to know—promise!

Ronald. I promise!

(*Exit* Hook *hurriedly* L.2.E.)

(Ronald *folds cheque and places it hastily in his pocket, then turns and goes up stage to meet* Colonel, *who enters with* Madge *and* Quayne.)

Colonel (*shaking hands warmly*). My dear boy, why didn't you come out to me?

Ronald (*awkwardly*). I've been talking to Hook!

Colonel (*turning aside, dryly*). I'm hardly flattered!

Quayne (*comes down* R., *shaking hands*). I am told we are to expect great things of you, Mr. Kederby.

Madge. Don't blush, Ronnie. We have been telling Mr. Quayne what you did at Sandhurst.

Ronald (*to* Madge). I am afraid you do a great deal too much talking about me! Wait until I disappoint you.

Colonel (*putting his arm on his shoulder*). You're not going to disappoint us, my boy. You're going to carry the Kederby name further than it's been before!

Quayne (*smiling*). You will have your work cut out, Mr. Ronald. Remember Vallapore!

(Colonel *shakes his head at him reproachfully.*)

Ronald (*turning away, speaking with an effort*). I'll do my best! (*Walking up to* Madge L. *of table.*)

(Colonel *going down stage* L. Quayne *moves after him.*)

Colonel. I'm proud of him, Quayne; and he's in my old regiment too!

(*Turning suddenly to* Ronald, *who with* Madge *is still near the window.*)

Oh, Ronald, have you got that little photograph of the barracks I asked you about; I want to show it to Quayne.

(Ronald *opens his coat and brings out a pocket book; as he pulls it out,* Hook's *cheque flutters to the ground behind him. He searches amongst the papers and finds the photo whilst crossing to* Colonel. Madge *meanwhile has picked up cheque, sees what it is, look of bewilderment; then as* Ronald *turns to her again, she puts her hands behind her.* Colonel *and* Quayne *examine photo.*)

Colonel. It's very good, Ronnie, boy. There are my old quarters, see, Quayne?

Quayne. Splendidly clear!

(Colonel *lays it on the table.* Quayne *pulls out his watch.*)

I really must catch the twelve train, Sir Bruce. I have such a thing as an office and clerks to look after, you know!

Colonel. If you must go then, I'll see you through the grounds; but you're coming to-night to dinner?

Quayne. Thank you, it's very kind of you, Sir Bruce. But I still have the friend I introduced to you the other morning staying with me.

Colonel. Oh, Mr. Seaton. He comes from Australia, didn't you say? Well, bring him along with you. Dare say he'd like a yarn with Hook.

Quayne. Well, I have a late appointment to-day, and could hardly manage dinner! May we come over afterwards?

Colonel. Of course, any time, as long as you come.

(Quayne *says good-bye to* Ronald *and* Madge, *then makes his exit with* Colonel *along path.*)

(Ronald *goes down stage,* Madge *follows.*)

Madge (*stopping within a yard of his back, half fearfully*). Ronnie!

Ronald. Well, what is it, little girl?

Madge (r. *of table, holding cheque out*). This dropped to the ground when you were looking for the photo. I couldn't help seeing what it was.

(*He gives a start, and takes it from her. He thrusts it in his pocket, then turns away.*)

(*Creeping up to him and touching him on the arm.*)

What does it mean, Ronnie—a cheque for a thousand pounds given by Mr. Hook to you?

Ronald (*after a pause, stammering*). I—he—it was a matter of business.

Madge (*staring hard into his confused face, then dropping a step back*). You are keeping something from me, Ronnie?

(*He does not answer.*)

Ronnie, dear, are you in trouble? I don't like to think——

Ronald (*turning suddenly to her*). Since you've seen the cheque, I suppose it can't be helped—I promised not to tell! Madge dear, I've been an awful fool—I don't know how to tell you.

Madge. Yes, yes!

Ronald (*brokenly*). I've been gambling.

(*She starts back, frightened.*)

I owed more than I could possibly pay—I was going to run away.

Madge. Run away!

Ronald. What else could I have done? I should have been disgraced, thrown out of the Service. I asked Hook to break it to you; instead he gave me this.

Madge. You took money from him, when you cannot pay it back?

Ronald. I know; I couldn't have done it if he hadn't made me think what it meant to the governor—to you!

Madge. Why didn't you go to father; he would have given you the money.

Ronald. He would if he could, but he hasn't got a penny!

Madge. What do you mean?

Ronald. You will have to know some time or other. By an unfortunate speculation he has lost all his private money; he did not tell you, as he did not want to worry you. Why, to keep me in the Service he has already made a tremendous sacrifice (*turns away* R.)—had Hook here.

Madge. What has Mr. Hook being here got to do with it?

Ronald. He keeps the place going—that's all. (*Bitterly.*) Is he the class of man likely to be the close friend of the family?

Madge. Do you mean he pays to be here?

Ronald. That's it. He's a man of no birth, suddenly become rich. He wanted to get into good society, and the governor, sooner than I should have to give up the Service, had him here.

Madge. Poor father! (*Crosses to* L.C.)

Ronald (R. *of table*). With his pride, it was a tremendous sacrifice! I feel a cur, Madge; yet what could I do?

Madge. And he gave you this money, knowing you could not pay it back?

Ronald. Yes; he insisted.

Madge. Oh, why? Why?

Ronald. He's a sort of rough diamond, I suppose.

MADGE (*sits* L. *of table*). But to think we owe this man a thousand pounds! How can he be repaid?

RONALD. He doesn't want it! He has more money than he knows what to do with. He did it from pure kindness of heart.

MADGE. All the same, it's a debt.

(COLONEL'S *voice is heard off.* "*Ronald, come along out.*")

RONALD (*answering*). All right, father! (*To* MADGE.) Coming, Madge? (*Goes up* L.C.)

MADGE (*shaking her head*). No, Ronnie, I'd like to be alone—I want to think.

RONALD (*coming back, suddenly catching hold of her hand*). Don't think I don't feel it, Madge. It has been a lesson to me; it'll keep me straight for the rest of my life! Only don't worry about it too much; it can't be helped, and remember I promised not to tell you. You mustn't give him the slightest hint, you know.

(MADGE *nods her head.*)

Some day, Madge, I'll make you proud of me.

MADGE (*looking up at him*). I think you will, dear!

(*He kisses her hand impulsively, then strides off through window.*)

(*Brushing her eyes with her handkerchief.*) It would have killed father! He was right to take it, yet—— Oh, it was splendid of him. All my life I shall be grateful to him, and if there is anything I can do to repay our debt, I will. Yet, what could I do?

(*Enter* HOOK *quietly* R.I.E. *He is studying the* "*Complete Gentleman,*" *he looks up, sees* MADGE, *gives a start, and hastily puts the little book back in his pocket.*)

HOOK (*nervously*). Thought you and Ronald were about together. (*Strides up to window.*)

MADGE. No, he is having a talk with father.

(HOOK *looks along path, then glances nervously down the room at her, then finally, as if he has made up his mind, comes down stage towards her.*)

HOOK. Can you spare me half a minute, Miss Madge?

MADGE (*glancing at him in surprise*). Why, of course, Mr. Hook.

HOOK (*turns away from her*). I hardly know how to begin—I—— (*Suddenly swinging round, blurting it out.*) Well, here it is, right out! I'm going to ask if you'll make me the happiest chap on this earth!

(*She shrinks back tremblingly. He approaches a step nearer to her.*)

I am not going to worry you—I'm only going to ask —if it's "no." Well, I hope I'll take it standing like a man.

(*He pauses and looks at her. She makes no reply; she is staring straight ahead of her.*)

I'm not much of a man at talking about these things, I've never had any experience. I only know I love the very ground you walk upon; I'd lay down my life for you any time! I don't know how it's happened—it was being here, seeing you every day. I couldn't help falling in love with you. And now it means everything in the world to me!

(*She half turns so that he may not see her face.*)

Madge, I'm not a soldier—not, perhaps, the class of man you'd have chosen for a husband. I was a bit rough once; perhaps the corners aren't quite gone yet, but they will in time. I'm working very hard. I only know I love you, would give anything in the world to make you happy! (*Pause, he looks pleadingly at her.*)

MADGE (R. *of table, turning round, tremblingly*). You think I am the wife to make you happy?

HOOK (L. *of table, eagerly*). Think! It's just the one thing on earth I count as a prize.

MADGE (*faintly*). But suppose my love didn't equal yours?

HOOK. It would in time; I'd make it! (*He half turns away, suddenly with change of tone.*) I don't want to worry you! I've told you what it means to me; but there, it'll be all right if you want to say "no." Just because a man asks you, you aren't bound to say "yes," are you? (*Pause.*) Even if it does just mean to him the difference between Heaven and Hell. You don't owe anything to me; you've no need to make me happy unless, unless you want to. (*Turning to her imploringly.*) Well, what do you say?

MADGE (*after a pause, speaking with difficulty*). I —I'll try and make you happy.

HOOK (*catching her hand and pressing it to his lips, excitedly*). You—you mean it? (*Slight movement* C.)

MADGE. I only ask one thing—don't speak about it for a day or so. (*Forcing a smile.*) You see, I want to get used to the idea.

HOOK. Anything! (*Holding her hand again, slowly.*) You've given me such happiness to-day, that I can hardly ever repay you. But I'll do my best; I'll give up my life to do it. Every debt should be repaid, shouldn't it?

MADGE (*turning her head away from him, slowly*). Yes, every debt should be repaid!

(*Enter* RODD L.2.E. *He holds the door open.* HOOK *springs apart from* MADGE.)

RODD. Miss Dolly Banter and Lady Nora Hervey, miss!

(*Enter* DOLLY *and* LADY NORA *quickly.* DOLLY *is*

an energetic-looking girl of about twenty-three, her dress is decidedly "sporty." Lady Nora *is a tall, graceful woman, a few years older, handsome and reposed in manner.*)

Dolly. This is Lady Nora Hervey, a pal of ours, Nora, Miss Madge Kederby. (*Hurrying forward to* Madge.) How do, Madge; hullo, Dickie, going strong?

(Colonel *and* Ronald *appear at windows, arm in arm; they enter the room.*)

(*To* Colonel.) Oh, good-morning, Colonel; and you too, Ronald; what a big boy you're growing! Colonel Sir Bruce Kederby—Lady Nora Hervey—there you are, there you are!

(*She turns with a laugh to* Hook. Colonel *greets* Lady Nora *courteously, and introduces her in turn to* Ronald *and* Madge.)

(*Turning round to her.*) Nora dear, this is Mr. Dickie Hook—beg pardon, Richard.

(*Introduces them;* Lady Nora *bows distantly and sits.*)

Suppose you're wondering at my springing in on you when I'm dining here to-night. Fact is we're getting up a scratch tennis party this afternoon, and it struck me that some of you would perhaps like to help us out! So I had the new cob put in, and here we are! (*To* Dickie.) She did the three miles in eleven minutes without turning a hair—fact, my boy!

Colonel. It's very kind of you! Afraid, however, I must decline; I have to go into Towchester.

Dolly. Well, then, Madge, you will? And Ronald, you too? (*Turning to* Hook.) And of course you will, you're not engaged?

Hook (*excitedly*). Oh, yes—I am—that is, I shall be delighted.

Dolly. Right, you're booked. That's settled—three o'clock sharp, and no jibbing at the post!

COLONEL. Lady Nora, I trust you will join the party from the Cedars, and dine with us this evening?

LADY NORA. Thank you, I shall be very pleased!

DOLLY (*who has been chatting to* HOOK, *swinging round*). Oh, I say, Sir Bruce, Nora met an old pal of ours while she was away—came home on the same ship as far as Alexandria. Give you three guesses! What, no tries? Why, Kit Wynne!

COLONEL (*to* LADY NORA). Really. We have known Sir Christopher Wynne since he was quite a little chap! Our children and he practically grew up together!

LADY N. Yes, he spoke of his friends here. (*Looks towards* MADGE.)

COLONEL (*laughing*). Oh, he and Madge used to have great times together. I daresay you know his history—how he has been roughing it in the Colonies, and now has suddenly stepped into his uncle's estates and fortune? I suppose he was in a fever to get home?

LADY N. Well, hardly, else he would have arrived as soon as I have. When I left him he was in a state of delightful uncertainty as to his movements! He wanted to see Cairo, and was coming through Paris; so it's rather difficult to say when he's likely to be back!

(DOLLY *is down stage with* HOOK, *going to piano and taking up photograph.*)

DOLLY. I always think that a very good likeness of Kit. What do you think, Nora?

(MADGE *starts.* LADY NORA *and* COLONEL *come down stage.* LADY NORA *takes photo and examines it.* DOLLY *turns to* MADGE, *and puts it on table.*)

Just taken before he left, wasn't it, Madge?

MADGE (*faintly*). Yes. (*Turns away, meets* LADY NORA'S *glance.*) Do you think it a good likeness?

Lady N. (*looking at her with deliberate smile*). I'm afraid you will find he has changed a good deal.

Dolly (*briskly*). Well, Sir Bruce, we must be heading off. Mustn't keep the governor waiting for his feed, you know. Nothing touches him so much!

Colonel. Come through the garden; our roses are well worth seeing!

(*He leads the way with* Lady Nora; Dolly *follows, also* Ronald *and* Madge.)

(Hook *lingers behind in the room. He watches them disappear, then turns and stands with his legs apart, his hands in his pockets, a smile of absolute happy triumph on his face.* Dolly *re-appears on path, pokes her head into the room.*)

Dolly. Dickie!

(*He swings round.*)

I've picked up a delightfully funny story, a real good 'un. Don't forget to ask me this afternoon. That's all. So long!

(*Makes her exit.*)

Hook. I can hardly believe it yet. My head's just buzzing with happiness! (*Sits down in chair and assumes attitude of forced composure.*) You don't want any more proof, Dickie! You're a gentleman at last. Would she have had me, bless her, if I was a husband she'd be ashamed of! (*Sitting up, patting his chest.*) I'm good enough for her, then I'm good enough for the whole world! (*Suddenly breaking into a laugh.*) Oh, it's just tremendously all right, it is! Lord, what a thing love is!

(*Door* L.2.E. *opens and* Rodd *enters, ushering in* Miss Agatha Kederby, *the* Colonel's *sister. She is a tall upright old lady, with a somewhat hard-looking face.*)

Rodd. This way, madam.

MISS AGATHA (*giving* RODD *a card*). Will you tell Sir Bruce, Miss Agatha Kederby is here!

RODD. Yes, madam, I will go and find him. (*Enthusiastically.*) You've come on just the right day, madam—the day, madam!

(*Makes his exit through windows.*)

(MISS AGATHA *starts after him.*)

HOOK (*coming forward and bowing*). The Anniversary of Vallapore, you know. Sir Bruce is seeing some visitors through the garden. Perhaps you will allow me to entertain you for a few moments.

MISS A. (*staring at him hard, she speaks in abrupt tone*). Entertain me! I don't want any entertaining. Who on earth are you?

HOOK. Only Mr. Hook, madam—merely Mr. Richard Hook.

MISS A. 'Em! (*Still staring.*) On business?

HOOK. No, madam—friend of the family.

MISS A. A what?

HOOK. A visitor. I've been staying here some time.

MISS A. (*with a shrug*). Really! (*Goes up* R.C.)

(*She turns away and takes a few steps down stage* L., *examining the room.* HOOK *takes hold of a chair as if about to offer it to her, then scratches his head as if an idea had suddenly come to him; he pulls out his "Complete Gentleman" and surreptitiously examines it, puts it away and looks towards her nervously; she is by the piano, and glancing at the pictures.*)

HOOK (*leaning on table*). Charmin' weather we're having for this time of year; the roads are just right now. Do you motor?

MISS A. (*swinging round*). Motor! Good heavens, no! (*Turns and picks up photo and examines it.*)

HOOK (*after nervous glances at her*). Ah, I daresay you read more? (*Pulls out book again and opens it stealthily.*) Have you read the *Morals of Cynthia?*

(*Slips book behind him quickly as she turns her head.*)

MISS A. (*abruptly*). No!

HOOK. That's a pity; well worth wading through, don't you know!

MISS A. (*without turning her head, still intent on photo*). I don't wade. (*Sits down.*)

HOOK (*putting book back in pocket, half aside, in despair*). Don't think much of these "Conversational Openings!"

MISS A. (*putting down photo, turning and surveying him, after a pause*). Well, have you any more small talk?

HOOK (*nervously*). No, have you? I wish somebody would come in. (*Aside.*)

MISS A. (*sitting down, grimly*). I am not renowned for my small talk!

(*There is an awkward pause.* HOOK *leans against edge of table and makes a vain attempt to appear at ease, picks up paper and looks at it.*)

HOOK (*suddenly*). Capital speech that, in the House last night——

MISS A. Which one?

HOOK (*hurriedly*). I don't know, but it was splendidly striking, don't you know.

(COLONEL *appears at windows,* MISS AGATHA *rises to her feet.* HOOK *slips off table and moves* R., *sees* COLONEL.)

(*In tone of relief.*) Thank the Lord! (*To door* R.)

COLONEL (*entering, stands before* MISS AGATHA *in attitude of surprise*). By Jove, Agatha!

MISS A. Rather surprised, Bruce?

COLONEL. Well, somewhat! You see——

MISS A. Look here, Bruce, I'm a plain-spoken woman.

HOOK. You are, by gum, you are!

MISS A. And it struck me as being rather silly to keep up a family quarrel for more than fifteen years!

COLONEL. It is a long time; I have almost forgotten what it was about.

MISS A. Well, never mind that. Anyway, I've come to know whether you care to resume acquaintance with your sister? If I did insult you in the past, well, I won't do it in the future without occasion! You can't expect me to say more than that, can you?

COLONEL. My dear Agatha, it is more than generous of you! I never knew you say so much before.

MISS A. I'm getting soft in my old age. I take it, then, we're to be friends again?

COLONEL. Delighted, my dear Agatha, delighted! Have you come to stay with us?

MISS A. Yes, but I won't come under false colours. I'm not the rich woman I was, Bruce, and I've sold my place in Norfolk.

COLONEL (*starts*). Sold Framage? But——

MISS A. Unfortunate investments.

(COLONEL *looks at her, then steps forward and shakes her by the hand impulsively. She looks surprised.*)

COLONEL. It's in the blood! Oh, I mean affection.

MISS A. But I'm quite independent; you needn't think I shall sponge on you in any way. I'm just an independent old woman with a few hundreds a year. I propose to spend a week or so with you, then clear off to a boarding-house. Will that suit you? If it don't, speak out like a man.

COLONEL. Well, then, as a man I'll speak out and say it will! 'Pon my word, Agatha, I think I shall find your society quite refreshing.

(*He goes up* L.C. *Enter* MADGE.)

HOOK (*half aside to* MADGE). I bet he will!

MISS A. That's your daughter, I suppose. I forget her name, what is it?

Colonel (*going to* Madge, *putting his arm round her affectionately*). Yes, this is Madge.

Miss A. (*holding out her hand*). Will you shake hands with your aunt—(Madge *attempts to kiss, and is repulsed*)—I never kiss!

(*They shake hands.* Miss Agatha *stares at her critically.*)

Madge. I have often wanted to know you.

Miss A. Really, you must have strange tastes, then. (*Rises.*)

Colonel. And the boy, Ronald, is home now too. So you will see us all!

Miss A. (*indicating* Hook). I have already had the pleasure of knowing this gentleman. He introduced himself, and was good enough to entertain me. He asked me if I motored, and whether I had read the *Morals of Cynthia*; he said he was a visitor here.

(*A ghost of a smile flickers over the* Colonel's *face, then he laughs lightly.*)

Colonel. Yes, Mr. Hook is my guest at present. (*To* Hook.) Thank you, Hook, for looking after my sister!

Hook (*nervously*). A pleasure, Sir Bruce, a pleasure!

Miss A. (*turning in a business-like manner towards* L.2.E.). As we've settled matters, I'd like to go to my room. (*To* Madge.) Perhaps you will show me one?

Madge (*going* L.2.E., *opening door*). Of course. Come along, aunt!

(*Exit both* L.2.E.)

Colonel. Extraordinary for her to turn up again like this! Do you know, Hook, she hasn't spoken to me for fifteen years. Quite unconsciously I offended her in some way.

Hook. A nasty temper, eh, Sir Bruce? (*Strolls up towards windows and looks along path.*)

Colonel (*laughing*). Well, well, call it eccentric! She's a very good sort really, but has sometimes rather a queer way of showing it. (*Walks towards* R.1.E.) I'm glad she has come round at last, still—— (*Gives a glance up stage at* Hook's *figure, with a shrug, opening door* R.2.E.) I'd rather not have to explain things. She won't be able to swallow him. It was a pretty big gulp in my own case.

(*Exit off* R.1.)

Hook (*coming down stage excitedly*). When shall I be able to see her alone again! I can't think, I can't talk, can't do anything! It's just wonderful to think that you, Dickie Hook, are engaged to the sweetest little lady that ever trod the earth. Engaged! And loved by her, for my own sake. I simply didn't know I was alive before! What luck! (*Walking towards* R.E.) Dickie Hook, you are going to send for the finest ring that can be found in London. What luck! (*Sits in big chair at desk and writes.*)

(*Enter* Ronald *; he comes running along the path in state of great excitement.*)

Ronald (*calling*). Madge! Where are you? I've got grand news! Where on earth is she? Madge! (*Opening door* L.2.E., *as he does so.*)

(Madge *enters.*)

Ah, here you are! I've been looking for you everywhere.

Madge. Don't you know that——?

Ronald (*excitedly*). No, no. Just you listen to me. Great news—who do you think is coming up the lane; he stopped to talk to Lady Nora and Dolly Banter; I ran on to tell you. Now, guess.

(*They move up stage towards windows.*)

Madge (*wonderingly*). How can I? (*Catching hold of his arm tremblingly.*) Not—not Kit?

Ronald (*triumphantly*). Yes, Kit Wynne! He came back suddenly, overland from Brindisi, and arrived this morning!

(Madge *puts a hand on the back of a chair for support.*)

And he came along here at once! (*Laughing.*) To see you, Madge! 'Pon my word, you are a lucky girl! I'll bet ten to one you're Lady Wynne before a year's out.

(Hook *overhears, gives a start, and sits back in chair unseen by them.*)

Madge (*hurriedly, with a sob in her voice*). No, no, Ronnie. (*She sinks down in the chair, and buries her face in her hands.*)

Ronald (*bending over her in surprise*). What's the matter, Madge? I—don't cry, dear—what is it?

Madge (*looking up, wearily*). You will have to know. This morning Mr. Hook asked me to be his wife—and I—I gave my consent!

Ronald. Promised to marry Hook! Good Lord!

(*She nods her head, then buries her face again.*)

But, Madge, it's impossible! He's a good fellow, but an outsider—quite an outsider—you don't love him?

Madge. No, I don't love him. (*Clutches hold of* Ronald's *arm.*) Oh, don't you see? When he had so generously saved you from ruin—what should I say?

Ronald. You accepted him because—because of what he has done?

Madge. How could I do otherwise, when he saved you from disgrace—saved father's name from dishonour? (*Crosses* c.) Every debt must be repaid. I have paid ours!

Ronald. But, Madge—— (*Rises and crosses* c.) Think what it means—the man himself—the——

Madge. I have thought—of what we owe him. (*Sits* l. *of table* c.) I have given my word.

RONALD. And all the time you love Kit Wynne. Oh, it's awful! (*Walks up to window.*)

MADGE. Don't make it worse for me, Ronnie! It's got to be done. And—he must never guess. We must be as generous as he has been. (*Forcing a laugh.*) Besides, I don't think I ever loved——

RONALD (*looking along path*). Here is Kit. I'll be off.

MADGE. Don't go, Ronnie—don't leave me!

(*Enter* SIR CHRISTOPHER WYNNE. *He is a handsome, sunburnt young fellow of twenty-five. He steps into the room and holds out his hand.*)

WYNNE. Madge!

MADGE (*shrinking back*). Kit!

WYNNE (*stepping forward and clasping her hand*). I suppose Ronnie told you how I got here? (*Looking into her face.*) And how are you, little girl, after all this time?

(*Looking round at* RONALD *who is still on path and with head turned the other way, ardently.*)

Just the same Madge as I left?

MADGE (*withdrawing her hand*). No, not quite the same Madge.

(*He looks surprised.* RONALD *glances at them, and comes to the rescue.*)

RONALD. Oh, there's the governor on the lawn. Come along, Kit! He'll be dying to see you.

MADGE (*going to window*). Yes, you must see father; come along!

WYNNE (*reluctantly*). Oh, very well. We must have our talk afterwards, then.

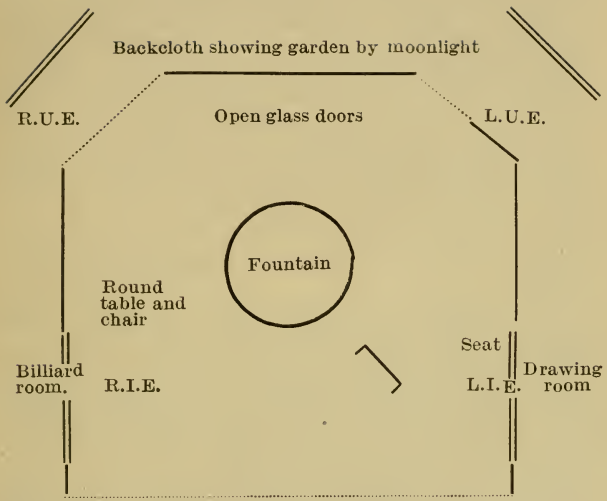
(*All three make their exit along path.*)

(*As soon as they disappear,* HOOK *jumps up from his chair, runs to windows and looks out after them. Running his hand over his hair, wearily.*)

Hook (*brokenly*). Not because she loved me—but because she knew I helped her brother—an outsider —not of her class—giving up another man. (*Puts his hand to his head, then looks along path again.*) Now what would a gentleman do? (*Takes out his little book, scans it, then throws it to the ground with a look of disgust. Enters the room and sinks into a chair.*) What would a gentleman do?

(Curtain.)

ACT II



The interior of a hall can be used for this scene, if more convenient.

SCENE.—*The conservatory. It is formed by painted walls reaching halfway up the stage, and completed by a large semi-circle of glass. In this, up stage, are two open glass doors,* R.U.E. *and* L.U.E., *showing portion of the grounds. In the walls, down stage, are two doors, one* L.I.E., *leading to the drawing-room, the other,* R.I.E., *to the billiard room. In the centre of the stage is a large fountain, and a little to the left of this a long iron conservatory seat, whilst down stage* L. *is a small iron table and chair. Palms and ferns complete the furniture.*

TIME.—*Same day, after dinner.*

NOTE.—*All the characters are in evening dress during this Act.*

(*As the curtain rises,* HOOK *is discovered sitting on edge of fountain* C. *smoking. He is facing* L., *and is deep in thought. From the drawing-room* L. *the sound of a piano being softly played can be heard, whilst from the billiard room* R. *comes the click of the balls and people's voices, laughing and talking. Door* R.I.E. *opens, talk becoming the louder for the moment as it is open, and* DOLLY *appears with cue in hand. She looks round, sees* HOOK, *then steals across quietly and prods him in the back with the cue. He turns round with a start.*)

DOLLY (*laughing*). What a slack beast you are, Dickie!

HOOK (*stifling a yawn*). Yes, I'm pretty slack to-night. What are you doing?

DOLLY (*holding her cue out*). Playing pills with Kit Wynne, Ronnie and Nora. I've come to fetch you. (*Indicating* L.I.E. *with cue.*) S'pose Madge is doing duty in with the old aunt and the Colonel. Dreffful slow for her, poor girl.

HOOK. Oh, I don't know. She likes being with her father.

DOLLY. She likes being with some one else a great deal better! (*Taking hold of his arm.*) Come along, Dickie, and play pills.

(*Door* L.I.E. *opens, and* RODD *enters carrying a tray with two empty coffee cups. He is very excited, and though not drunk is pleasantly on the way towards it.*)

RODD. Pills! Pills! Who said "pills"? Gad, we gave 'em pills that day!

(*He stumps with his stiff leg excitedly across stage, and puts his tray down on the little iron table* R., *then to where* Dolly *is standing, laughing at him.*)

Dolly (*mischievously*). What day was that, Rodd?

Rodd. What day! Good 'eavens! (*Half aside.*) Is the wee woman mad? (*Turns and lays hand heavily on* Hook's *shoulder.*) It would 'ave done your heart good to 'ave seen the Colonel leading us through to the gates; clean through their lines we 'ad to go, and didn't we know it! I can 'ear the bugle now. And then orf we went on that last 'arf mile—right into the thick of sending the devils helter-skelter. (*Seizing the cue from* Dolly's *hand, cutting right and left with it wildly.*) There, there, not two 'undred yards away, there's the gate in sight! One more spurt, damme—we're through—and Lord, they 'ave carved me leg!

(*His cork leg has been unable to stand the strain of his stumping about, and he sinks down suddenly on the long iron seat, the leg sticking out straight in front of him. He bends it carefully down again.*)

(*In a subdued tone.*) Yes, the devils did for me that day, yes, but we did for them! And I'm with the Colonel still, an' I got this. (*Fingering a medal.*) And hang me, if anything else much matters!

Dolly (*taking a flower from her dress, in a tone of command*). Sergeant Rodd! Attention!

(*He salutes stiffly.*)

You're a jolly good sort, and I award you the order of the white carnation!

(*She puts it in his coat, and he salutes again.*)

Rodd. Thanky 'ee, miss! I'll go and drink your 'ealth. (*Marches towards table; half way, turns round to* Hook.) An' your health too, sir.

Hook. Thank you, Rodd.

Rodd (*picking up his tray, banging his fist on the table*). And everybody's health!

Hook. I should do it in tea, Rodd.

Rodd. Tea on this day, good 'eavens, sir! Men of the 21st Hussars. Attention! Right turn! Quick march! (*Singing.*)

(*Marches up stage, humming the British Grenadiers, and makes his exit* R.U.E.)

Hook. I wonder which'll hold out the longer, Rodd or the whisky?

Dolly (*laughing, looking* R.U.E.). I'll back old Rodd. (*Turns to* Hook.) Come along, Dickie, and play pills.

Hook. I don't think I'll play billiards just now; I'll stay here and finish my smoke, if you don't mind.

Dolly (*looking round*). Look here, Dickie, what's the matter? Had a bad day? (*Going up to* Hook.)

Hook. No, no! Just a kind of fancy. Give me two or three minutes more, and I'll be ready for any sort of fun you can name.

Dolly (*crossing towards* R.I.E.). All right; I'll give you just five minutes. No hedging! You see it's rather awkward for me unless you help me out!

Hook. Awkward? Why—how?

Dolly (*turning round to him*). How thick you are, Dickie! Don't you know that Kit Wynne and Madge were awfully keen on one another before he went to Australia?

Hook. Oh yes, of course—that is, I s'pose they were.

Dolly. And that boy Ronald seems to be rather keen on Nora. So, don't you see, I have to count on you to give me some fun, else I'm in for rather a slow time. Catch on?

Hook (*nodding*). We'll have a real good time together, in—in a few minutes, eh?

Dolly (*laughing and running towards* R.I.E.). Thanks! I never spoil sport, you know.

HOOK. Oh no, we mustn't spoil sport!

DOLLY (*waving her hand*). So long—five minutes, remember.

(*Exit* R.I.E.)

HOOK (*looking after her reflectively*). Spoil sport! Letting him and her be together! (*Shrugs his shoulders, and takes a step or two towards fountain, suddenly puts his hand to his forehead.*) Oh, if he hadn't come back, if I hadn't heard. (*Fiercely, forgetting his h's in his excitement.*) I wasn't supposed to 'ave 'eard! (*Coming towards* L.I.E.)

(*He stops suddenly as the piano is again heard in the drawing-room, and* MADGE *begins to sing a little love ballad. He creeps down to* L.I.E., *and turns the handle and opens the door half an inch or so that the words are heard more plainly. He listens, and the fierceness dies from his face. As the song comes to a finish, he walks with bent shoulders to garden seat* L., *and sinks down with a sigh.*)

(*Softly.*) Yet I did hear, understood, and—— (*Pause, then he puts his chest out and sticks cigar in the corner of his mouth*). I'm a gentleman!

(*Door opens* L.I.E., *and* COLONEL *and* MISS AGATHA *enter arm in arm.*)

MISS A. Not a bad voice; I've heard a good many better.

COLONEL. But none sweeter, Agatha.

MISS A. Don't be sentimental, Bruce. It gets on my nerves.

(HOOK *has sprung to his feet.*)

HOOK (*politely*). Will you sit here?

MISS A. No. (*Grimly.*) Unless you wish to entertain me.

HOOK (*nervously*). No, no; that is——

Colonel (*with a smile*). The night's simply glorious; shall we take a stroll? The air's so warm that there's no risk of your catching cold.

Miss A. Who said there was? I'm not one of your new fandangled women, afraid to take a mouthful of fresh air! (*Turning round.*) Give me a shawl, and I shall be all right.

Colonel (*crossing hurriedly* L.I.E., *calling*). Madge, dear, bring your aunt's shawl; it's on the couch.

Miss A. (*facing* Hook). And I think the men of the present day are getting worse than the women.

Hook (*nervously*). You do? I believe you're right.

(*Enter* Madge L.I.E. *with shawl. She puts it over* Miss Agatha's *shoulders.* Colonel *lighting cigar.*)

Miss A. Thanks, child. Now I'm ready! Bruce, give me your arm. You can light that cigar outside.

(Colonel *gives a smiling look of resignation to* Madge, *then takes his sister's arm; they walk up stage together.*)

Colonel. It's quite like old times, Agatha.

Miss A. Don't talk nonsense, Bruce.

Colonel. My dear, I won't. You shall do it all yourself.

(*Exit both* R.U.E.)

(Madge *and* Hook *are left staring after them; they turn slowly and face one another. She gives a little nervous start, and takes a step towards* R.I.E.)

Madge (*nervously*). Are you coming to the billiard room, Mr. Hook?

Hook (*taking a step towards her, looking round to see they are alone.*) Not for a moment. I was wondering if you could spare me a minute. I've been waiting for a chance to catch you.

Madge (*hesitates for a moment, then crosses and*

sits down on seat L. *with an effort, gently*). Why, yes, of course, Mr. Hook.

Hook (*awkwardly*). It's just something I want to tell you—about a mistake. I—— (*His voice stops.*)

Madge. A mistake?

Hook (*turning away, after a pause*). Yes, a real bad sort of mistake! (*Facing her, pulling himself together.*) This morning I asked you to be my wife —you consented.

Madge (*looking at him, startled*). I consented, yes.

Hook (*making an ill attempt at jocularity*). Yes, that's where the mistake comes in!

Madge. You mean?

Hook. Well, I shouldn't have asked you. (*Facing her with a sudden brusqueness.*) To cut the matter short, will you let me off?

Madge (*bewildered*). Let you off?

Hook. I've thought the matter over, and don't want to marry you.

Madge (*unable to conceal the joy in her voice*). I am free, then?

Hook. Yes, just forget that our little conversation ever occurred; no one knows about it, so none will be a penny the wiser. (*Almost roughly.*) What do you say?

(Madge *takes a step down stage, and stands with clasped hands. Directly she cannot see him,* Hook's *expression changes, and there is an imploring look on his face.*)

Madge. It shall be as you wish! (*Turning round to him.*) I suppose you find you didn't love me after all, that's what you said——

Hook (*laughing helplessly*). I did it on impulse. Yes, suppose it was impulse.

(*She is looking at him intently; he begins to laugh*

again, but it dies away as he sees something in her eyes.)

Madge (*hesitatingly*). I don't think you're that kind of man!

Hook (*slowly*). That kind of man?

Madge. To do a thing like that on impulse. Oh, I don't understand, yet——

Hook (*going to her*). Yet you're glad.

(*She looks up startled.*)

Yet, you're glad!

(*She drops her head; he laughs gently.*)

So you ought to be. You wouldn't be the daughter of Sir Bruce Kederby, C.B., if you weren't.

(*Again she looks up; he silences her with a gesture.*)

It's right all the way, just listen! (*He leans on the back of his seat.*) Money can do most things in this world. It can give you a house in Park Lane, any sort of kickshaws you can name, it can make a snob of you, and that's what I've been. I spoofed myself I was a gentleman, bragged of it to you this morning. And now I know I'm only a bounder, just the every-day sort of bounder who has had his head turned by a pile of money! (*After pause.*) And, being a bounder, I got it fixed in my head that it would be a big thing to marry the daughter of Sir Bruce Kederby, and I went for the idea. You know what happened—she consented; strikin' wonderful thing, wasn't it? (*His voice softens.*) But I somehow had got a glimpse of why she did it.

(Madge *goes* c.)

And somehow the bounder was ashamed, and saw it all of a heap, that money can buy a wife but not the love of a real little lady! (*Crosses* c.)

Madge (*softly*). I don't know what to say—I'm only a girl—I'm very sorry if——

Hook (*turning round*). There's nothing to be sorry about, little lady! I ought never to have asked you. (*With an attempt at cheerfulness.*) I shan't be miserable, you know! I shall just get hold of somebody who likes my society, and forget all about it in a day or so.

Madge (*brightening*). Then you didn't really love me?

Hook (*looking at her, then turning away with a laugh*). No, I didn't love—only the snob idea—the snob idea.

Madge (*holding out her hand*). I don't think you a snob or a bounder!

(*He takes her hand.*)

You have been more than generous!

Hook. That's just nice of you. (*Pauses.*) Now there's only just one thing left to make you the happiest girl in England.

(*She looks up with a start.*)

You see, I've guessed your secret; I didn't know this morning, else—it's right, isn't it?

Madge (*shyly*). Yes, it's right!

Hook. He is just the best man in the world in your eyes, and you really love him?

Madge (*turning away*). Before he left, he—but now after all this time it may be different——

Hook. Yes, but you love him—you love him? It's quite safe with me!

Madge (*softly*). Yes, if he's the same, I love him—if he's the same! (*Putting her hands up to her cheeks.*) Oh!

Hook. Of course he's the same! And you'll just be tremendously happy.

Madge. I don't know how to thank you. (*Pausing, half fearfully.*) But, Ronnie—I found out what you did for him this morning.

Hook (*gruffly*). I know, that's why you accepted

me. I'll never do a thing I want to again if it's going to be found out.

Madge. It was such a tremendous thing!

Hook. It was the littlest thing in the world to me. Not a word more about it. (*Turning to her impulsively.*) There, just forget everything, except that you're free. It's good, ain't it? And I'm in the same boat too; I'm free to——

(*Door opens quickly* R.I.E. *and* Dolly *appears, followed by* Ronnie, Lady Nora *and* Wynne.)

Dolly. Free to what, Dickie?

Hook. Why, to race you round the tennis courts, of course. The five minutes is up?

Dolly. Come along, my cheery sportsman!

(*Exit* Dolly *and* Hook R.U.E.)

(Ronnie *crosses to* Madge L. *side of fountain.* Lady Nora *and* Wynne *are down stage.* Lady Nora *glances at* Dolly *and* Hook, *and shrugs her shoulders disdainfully.*)

Ronnie (*to* Madge). You should have been with us, Madge. Kit has been telling us a lot of his adventures. By Jove, he has roughed it!

(Madge *looks towards* Wynne *and smiles.*)

Wynne. It makes one appreciate being at home again. (*Crosses to* Ronnie *and* Madge.)

Lady N. (*to* Wynne). How long do you think the home sentiment will last in your case?

Wynne (*staring at* Madge). To the end of the chapter!

Lady N. (*laughing*). The first chapter! There is always more to follow with men like you!

(*He shakes his head.*)

Ronnie (*to* Lady Nora). You'll come a stroll, Lady Nora? The grounds are awfully pretty by moonlight!

Lady N. Oh, I love moonlight!

(Ronnie *takes a step or two up stage* R. Lady Nora *prepares to follow, then turns to* Wynne *for a moment.*)

Don't crowd anything irrevocable into the first chapter, Sir Christopher! The knot takes such a lot of undoing, you know.

(*Laughs and joins* Ronnie; *they go up stage together and exit* R.U.E.)

Wynne (*crossing to* Madge, *placing one foot on fountain*). At last! I've hardly had a chance of speaking to you, Madge, before now. (*Looking at her.*) By Jove, little girl, you haven't altered much yet; how old are you? Why, it must be——

Madge. Twenty-one and two months—terrible, isn't it? And you, Kit, you are twenty-seven!

Wynne. And am I much changed?

Madge (*looking at him searchingly*). I don't know; you look—more of a man, I think. Yes, that's it—more of a man.

Wynne (*laughing*). I ought to! It was pretty rough out there at first, Madge.

Madge (*softly*). Poor Kit! (*Looking up at him with a smile.*) Never mind, it's all changed now.

Wynne. Yes, it's all right now. (*Looking round.*) Oh, you don't know what it means, Madge, to be back again amongst you all. (*Looking at her.*) To see you again.

Madge. And we're awfully pleased, Kit, too!

Wynne. We?

Madge (*rises, comes down stage to seat* C.) Yes, I'm pleased, Kit.

Wynne (*following her*). Don't you remember, Madge, it was just here, four years ago, that we said good-bye.

Madge. Yes, I remember.

Wynne. You were saying "good-bye" to a ne'er-do-well, a boy who had quarrelled with his

uncle, the best friend he ever had. What a fool I was!

Madge. You only misunderstood each other. You had the pluck to be independent!

Wynne. The folly! Yet he forgave me, left everything to me as he had originally intended! And I never had the opportunity of thanking him.

Madge. It wasn't your fault.

Wynne. No, it couldn't be helped; I was practically starving in Australia when the news came. (*He pauses, then looks down at her, softly.*) Yes, it's very good to be back again, Madge. I often used to picture you, sitting here of an evening; wondered if you sometimes thought of me! Did you?

Madge (*smiling reproachfully*). Sometimes, Kit.

Wynne. Perhaps I didn't wonder much, perhaps I knew! You remember what passed between us that night, Madge?

Madge. I remember everything.

Wynne. My future was uncertain; I was going out to fight the world! I couldn't bind you in any way; you were to be free. If I went under—well, you would never have seen me again. If things came out right, I should come back to you—if you had not changed.

(*He stops suddenly as if in doubt whether to proceed; she is looking at the water, and does not see his face. She begins to raise her head; with a sudden impulse, he bends down and takes her hand.*)

Things have come out right, Madge; I have come back, and you have not changed?

Madge (*looking at him with shining eyes, rising*). No, not changed, Kit dear; just the same!

Wynne (*taking both her hands*). This is the best night in my life! (*Takes her in his arms and kisses her.*)

Madge (*linking her arm within his, they move up stage* L.). To think it should have all come right

like this. To find you the same old Kit, not changed a bit!

WYNNE. Not a bit! (*Is about to kiss her again.*)

MADGE. Kit!

(*Door* R.I.E. *opens and* RODD *enters; he marches in humming "Tommy Atkins," then sees* WYNNE *and* MADGE. MADGE *gives a little laugh.*)

(*Then escapes from* WYNNE *and runs off* R.2.E.)

RODD (*slapping his thigh*). Don't mind me, sir. Gad, but it's good news! And to think of its happening on *the* day, of all days! Jove, sir, you're a lucky man! She's as good as gold, and the man who says it is the man who nussed 'er as a babby, and 'as watched her every day since; and 'e's the man that knows. Good luck to you, sir!

WYNNE (*laughing*). Thank you, Rodd.

RODD (*chuckling to himself, crossing* R.I.E.). I must go and drink your 'ealth, sir—both your 'ealths! To think of its happening to-day. Lord, love me, I am having a night! (*He bangs the door open, and stumps excitedly through; the cork leg suddenly goes stiff.*) I've got so many 'ealths this evening, I don't want to forget any. Oh, damn that leg!

(*Exit* R.I.E.)

WYNNE (*enthusiastically*). He's right; I am a lucky man!

(*He turns to go after* MADGE, *but stops as* LADY NORA *enters. She smiles and comes down stage to him. The boyish enthusiasm fades away, and he assumes the air of a man of the world.*)

LADY N. I sent the boy in to get some chocolates; I always eat chocolates in the moonlight.

WYNNE (*lighting a cigarette*). Oh, indeed!

LADY N. Then I caught sight of a girlish figure running out from the door; she was smiling, and her eyes held that look that means only one thing in

a woman. Then I thought I'd just drop in for a moment, and——

Wynne. Congratulate me?

Lady N. It wasn't the word I was thinking of! So you've actually proposed to her, my friend?

Wynne (*nodding*). And been accepted.

Lady N. Dear, dear! What a sentimentalist you are! After dinner, a conservatory, a pretty face—and you fall a victim——

Wynne. Hardly accurate, is it? It's only finishing what was begun four years ago.

Lady N. The interval's too great! Come, confess, my dear friend; you are not the unsophisticated boy you were four years ago, although you are still the same sentimentalist. Life then meant marriage with the pretty little rustic maid, and existence in the same rustic surroundings. Now what does it mean?

Wynne. Much about the same—life with a pretty girl whom I love, the dearest little woman on earth.

Lady N. (*laughing*). What a man you are for your illusions! For the moment you are still thinking yourself the simple, nice boy you were then. Now you are Sir Christopher Wynne, with an income far beyond an average man's wants! And you've already tasted the delights of the world, far beyond the average man's wants. I suppose it was this overwhelming desire for sweet simplicity that made you spend weeks in Cairo, Monte Carlo, and Paris on the way home.

(Wynne *smokes on a trifle sullenly, but says nothing; she approaches a trifle nearer to him.*)

And there was a pretty face that attracted you in each—now confess.

Wynne. Would it not be superfluous, when you know so much?

Lady N. And do you remember that night when

you gave that delightful supper at the *Café de Paris* at Monte Carlo, and the moment when things were at their brightest you glanced round and whispered to me, "This is life; I have only existed before; that is the life I mean to lead."

(*She turns away laughing.* WYNNE *continues to smoke with a dogged expression. She turns once again to him.*)

And you tell me seriously that this simple little person—just sweetly good, and nothing else, is going to fill a niche in that life. (*Walking to fountain and sits.*) My dear Sir Christopher, I admit men are extraordinary, but—well, there's a limit to a woman's credulity.

WYNNE. They say the only thing a woman won't believe is the truth!

LADY N. Yes, if it does happen to be the truth.

WYNNE. Only the future can convince you! (*Moving towards* L.U.E.) You'll pardon me, but the newly engaged man, you know—— (*Walks up stage.*)

LADY N. (*laughingly*). By all means! I give you a fortnight.

WYNNE. And then?

LADY N. Oh, you'll ride away—as a man like you will always ride away when it's merely a case of a pretty face—and nothing else!

WYNNE (*he looks thoughtfully at her; then a smile creeps slowly over his face*). And in the meantime it is rather pleasant. (*Bowing.*) Au revoir!

LADY N. Au revoir, and the pleasantest of meantimes!

(WYNNE *makes his exit leisurely* L.U.E.)

(*She watches him, then turns slowly and sits down on seat* R. *thoughtfully.*)

He knows I'm right; yes, in his heart of hearts he knows I'm right. And when he does ride away—— (*Rises, smiling.*) Well, we shall see. A man who is

"lifey" gets tired of a pretty face; it's the clever woman who keeps his interest and marries him!

(Ronnie *enters* L.I.E.; *he is carrying a little silver basket of chocolates. She sees him and smiles.*)

Ronnie. I've been looking for you everywhere, Lady Nora! (*Holding basket out.*) I got 'em from the dining-room table; they hadn't cleared the show yet.

Lady N. Will you ever forgive me for troubling you; it was only a whim. I'm afraid I didn't really want them!

Ronnie (*turning away, aside*). Well, I'm—— (*Crosses to table* R., *and puts basket down; turns and looks admiringly at her.*)

(*She has her back turned to him, and is standing by the fountain.*)

(*Crosses to her; she turns.*)

If you won't have the chocolates, will you have—er—the moonlight again?

Lady N. Not for a moment; I have something to tell you, now guess!

Ronnie (*bewildered*). I'll give it up.

Lady N. Something has happened to a near relative of yours—something that you might perhaps have expected.

Ronnie. Why, not Madge and Kit!

(*She nods.*)

They've fixed it up? Well done, Kit! I'm so glad.

(Colonel *and* Miss Agatha *enter arm in arm* R.U.E.)

Miss A. (*to* Colonel). So it all comes of your being fool enough to dabble in speculations, eh? Now, what on earth could you know about making money? (*Putting hand on fountain.*)

Colonel. I confess my ability to make money was not equal to my wonderful skill in losing it. But we all like to try!

Miss A. I know. If at first you don't succeed, try, try again—and go bankrupt.

(Colonel *sees* Ronnie *and* Lady Nora; *touches* Miss Agatha *warningly*.)

Ronnie (*swinging round*). Hullo, governor; heard the news—splendid, isn't it?

Colonel. I've hardly had a surfeit of splendid news lately; what is this particular intelligence?

Ronnie. Why, that Kit and Madge have fixed it up.

Miss A. Do, for Heaven's sake, talk English, boy. Fixed what up?

Ronnie. Become engaged! Good, isn't it? We all knew she was keen on him.

Colonel (*rubbing his hands*). By Jove, he hasn't wasted much time! (*Turning to* Miss Agatha.) I'm very pleased, Agatha!

Miss A. Well, anybody but a fool would be! Thirty thousand a year, hasn't he?

Colonel. Oh, it's not that! I only want to see my Madge happy! Who told you, Ronnie boy?

Lady N. I did, Sir Bruce. I learnt it a second ago, and like a woman couldn't keep it to myself.

Colonel. Where is Madge? I want to see her.

(Dolly Banter *enters at a run* R.U.E. Hook *arrives a second afterwards*.)

Dolly. You're not half a sprinter, Dickie; out of form, old boy. You owe me two pairs of gloves, and don't forget it!

Miss A. (*throwing a backward glance in* Dolly's *direction*). What creatures there are on God's earth!

Ronnie (*crossing to* Hook). Hook, old chap, Madge and Kit have come to an understanding; I thought——

Hook (*half mechanically*). You shouldn't, she was free—free—I'm glad, you understand!

(Dolly *has crossed to* Lady Nora, *and has been listening to her.*)

Dolly. Well, Kit's a regular flyer; he's past the post when others would barely have got under way!

(*Enter* Madge L.I.E. *She sees the others, and pauses for a moment, hesitatingly.* Colonel *with outstretched arms crosses to her.*)

Colonel. My dear little girl, we know! (*Looking at her fondly.*) No need to ask if you are pleased!

Madge (*kissing him*). You really don't mind, father?

Colonel (*patting her*). I'm delighted!

(Lady Nora *and* Dolly *cluster round her.*)

Lady N. My best congratulations! Sir Christopher is charming.

Madge. Thank you!

Dolly. A rattling good sort, Madge! You've drawn a first prize.

Ronnie (*up stage, aside to* Hook, *who is watching the scene intently*). Hook, I don't understand everything, but you've been a splendid pal. I can never repay——

Hook (*indicating* Madge *who is laughing and smiling happily with* Dolly *and* Lady Nora, *half to himself*). Isn't that enough repayment to see her like that?

(Ronnie *stares wonderingly at him;* Hook *suddenly awakes and turns on him.*)

Oh, hang it, go and talk to the girls; don't stop here boring me about your gratitude. I'm full up with it, do you hear?

(RONNIE *smiles and crosses down to the others.* HOOK *turns and strolls* R.U.E.)

(*Exit.*)

RONNIE (*to* MADGE). I needn't tell you what I think about it, Madge, old girl.

MADGE (*smiling, pressing his hand affectionately*). I think I know Ronnie, dear.

MISS A. (*on seat*). Child, come here!

(MADGE *goes to her.*)

MADGE. Yes, aunt.

MISS A. Now, tell me what sort of a young man is this? Of course, I know he is good looking and has money. Is he honest, straightforward, manly, and with all the rest of the virtues?

MADGE (*smiling*). Has any man got them all, aunt?

MISS A. Good! If you had said "yes," I should have put you down as a fool. As it is, I hope you won't be more disappointed than most girls are in their husbands.

MADGE. Oh, thank you, aunt.

COLONEL (*patting her on arm*). That's a tremendous lot for your aunt to say, my dear. It practically amounts to fulsome congratulations.

MISS A. (*sharply*). It doesn't mean anything of the kind, Bruce.

COLONEL (*shaking his head*). Oh, don't tell me. (*Looking round.*) Well, where is Kit? We all want to see him now.

MADGE. I think he is in the garden. (*Moving a pace or so up stage.*) I'll fetch him.

(*Door* L.I.E. *opens and* RODD *enters; he holds the door open.*)

RODD (*thickly*). Mr. Quayne——

COLONEL (*walking towards the door*). Ah!

(Quayne *enters with* Geoffrey Seaton, *a man of about thirty. He wears a short beard.*)

Colonel (*shaking hands*). Very good of you to come, Quayne! How are you, Mr. Seaton? Let me introduce you—my sister, Mr. Seaton—Lady Nora Hervey, Miss Banter—and this is my daughter—Madge dear, Mr. Seaton! (*Looking round.*) Where's Hook? (*To* Seaton.) The man from Australia I told you about, you know. You must have a yarn together, and we must all hear. An evening in Australia, what do you all say?

Quayne. I can assure you he has had some remarkable adventures, Sir Bruce.

Colonel. Splendid! And with three of 'em at it we ought to be well entertained! Well, for the moment, shall we say the billiard room?

(Ronnie *and* Lady Nora, Dolly *and* Quayne *move towards* r.i.e. *laughing together.* Madge *takes a step or two up stage.*)

(*To* Miss Agatha.) What would you like to do, Agatha?

Miss A. What I am going to do, Bruce, is to sit in the drawing-room quietly, by myself. (*Moving towards* l.i.e.) And I fancy that's what they all want me to do!

(Colonel *and* Seaton *laughing follow the others into the billiard room* r.i.e. Hook *suddenly enters* l.i.e. *He holds the door open politely for* Miss Agatha.)

(*To* Hook.) I've found out about you! I thought there must be some explanation!

Hook (*nervously*). That's highly satisfactory, that is! (*Pause, half fiercely.*) Well, what of it? What have you got to say?

Miss A. I haven't quite made up my mind. I'll tell you later if it would interest you.

(*Exit* L.I.E.)

Hook (*looking after her, dryly*). Yes, I expect it would be interesting!

(*He turns and sees* Madge *at garden door* R.U.E.; *she comes down towards him; he goes up stage, and they meet by fountain.*)

Madge. I thought I'd just wait a moment to——

Hook. Tell me he was just the same?

Madge. Yes, just the same. Oh, you don't know how grateful I am to you, Mr. Hook!

Hook. Yes, I had a fortunate escape, hadn't I?

(*She laughs; he turns to her.*)

I suppose, if he hadn't been the same old Kit, if anything had happened, if he had changed, it would have broken your heart, eh?

Madge (*thoughtfully*). I think it would. (*Smiling again.*) But he hasn't; he's just the same dear simple old Kit, and he loves me!

Hook. And his love means all the difference between happiness and misery to you?

Madge (*slowly*). Yes, all the difference.

Hook (*pulling out his cigarette case*). Things couldn't have fallen out better, could they? (*Lighting cigarette.*) Wonderful, what a knack things have of coming out straight, isn't it?

(*They walk up stage* R. *together.*)

Madge (*laughing*). Yes, wonderful, when they just get the touch to send them in the right direction. (*Holding out her hand.*) I must go and find him. Once more, thank you!

Hook (*silencing her with a gesture*). I'll go and drown myself in the fountain if I have another word

of thanks! There, go and find him; I don't expect you'll have much trouble!

Madge (*at door*). And what are you going to do?

Hook (*enthusiastically*). Have a clinking time with some one who understands my funny little ways; she's my cut, just my cut, and a ripper!

(*Door opens* R.U.E., *and* Dolly *and* Lady Nora *enter*. Lady Nora *crosses towards* L.I.E.)

Madge (*looking at* Dolly, *then at* Hook, *smiling meaningly*). I'm so glad!

(*Exit* R.U.E.)

(Hook *looks after her; the enthusiasm dies out of his face, and a look of dejection passes over it. He glances at* Dolly, *then crosses quietly up stage to* L.U.E. *with the intention of stealing out.*)

Lady N. (*at* L.I.E. *to* Dolly). I'm going to amuse myself with old Miss Kederby. Coming?

Dolly. No, thanks; shouldn't call that amusement.

Lady N. Oh, Dolly!

(Lady Nora *laughs and exit* L.I.E.)

Dolly (*seeing* Hook). Hallo, Dickie, where off to?

Hook. Oh, is that you?

(*They come towards one another.*)

Dolly. Now, look here, Dickie, this is the second time you have given me the slip!

Hook. No, really!

Dolly. Well, it may be chance, or it mayn't. But I'd like to be sure; don't hanker after having fun with you if you'd rather not, you know!

Hook (*recklessly*). Oh, I'm on for any kind of sport. (*Coming* C.)

Dolly (*holding out her hand.*) Mean it?

Hook (*shaking hands*). All the way! What shall we do?

(*The sound of a piano playing a waltz is heard off in drawing-room* L.)

Dolly (*laughing*). That's old Nora! What a jolly waltz! (*With air of inspiration.*) Dickie! Shall we? There's nobody about.

(Hook *bows to her and offers his arm. She takes it, and they waltz down stage.* Wynne *and* Madge *appear at window* R.U.E.)

Where did you learn to waltz so nicely, Dickie?

Hook. Shilling hops in Melbourne. (*He sees* Madge.) Good, isn't it? (*Raising his voice.*) We get on Ai together, don't we?

Dolly. Think so, really?

Hook (*enthusiastically*). By gum! I haven't enjoyed anything so much for months! Up we go again!

(Wynne *touches* Madge *on arm, and they disappear from window* R.U.E. Dolly *and* Hook *get towards* L.U.E., *door* R.I.E. *opens and* Colonel *and* Quayne appear.)

Colonel. It's a shame to drag you away to talk business, Quayne!

Quayne. Not at all!

(*They see* Dolly *and* Hook, *and laugh.*)

(*The pair stop dancing suddenly. Hook offers his arm to Dolly. They stroll off.*)

Colonel. Young blood, Quayne, young blood!

(*They stroll centre.*)

I've been thinking things over, Quayne, and I've come to a definite conclusion. The Grange will have to go, and I want you to put it up for sale at once.

Quayne. But now that Miss Madge has made such a favourable match, Sir Bruce——

Colonel. No, Quayne, I'm not going to trade on that. There, my mind is made up. This last call of

five thousand has done it. Of course it'll be a bit of a wrench, but 'pon my word, I'm not sure but I shall be glad; so put it up, Quayne, and carry the thing through as soon as possible. The proceeds will enable me to clear myself and keep the boy in the Service.

QUAYNE (*with a sigh*). Very well, Sir Bruce, I'll do my best!

COLONEL. You don't think there will be any difficulty about a buyer?

QUAYNE. I'm not sure; you see, it's an awkward size—too large for the English aristocracy, and too small for American millionaires!

COLONEL. Gad, we must get something between the two; anyhow, set about it at once, won't you? And keep it as quiet as possible.

(*Piano starts off* L.)

QUAYNE. Very well, Sir Bruce, if your mind is made up!

(*Door* L.I.E. *opens and* MISS AGATHA *appears; she hears the next few words without being observed.*)

COLONEL (*looking round, without seeing her*). Jove, Quayne, for two hundred years the Kederbys have been here; and now it's going, through my damned stupidity! (*Pulling himself up.*) Well, the only thing is to take it standing——

QUAYNE (*quietly*). Like a Kederby!

COLONEL (*smiling*). Yes, like a Kederby. (*Suddenly sees* MISS AGATHA.) Hullo, Agatha! (*Indicating* L.I.E.) Is that Lady Nora playing?

MISS A. Yes, I asked her. I preferred her playing to her talking. But both jar! Go in, and have your turn!

(COLONEL *hesitates.*)

Mr. Quayne will entertain me!

Colonel. There's a directness about your remarks, Agatha, which is very refreshing!

(*Exit* L.I.E.)

(*Piano stops.*)

Miss A. (*to* Quayne). Are you a sensible man?

Quayne. I have two reputations—one amongst the clients for whom I have won cases, the other amongst those for whom I have lost them! You have to put me to the test before you find out!

Miss A. Do you know much about my affairs? Be frank!

Quayne. Only hearsay; I gathered that you had lost the most of your money through bad investments!

Miss A. (*chuckling*). Man alive, you don't think I'm as big a fool as my brother, do you?

Quayne (*looking at her quickly*). You mean——?

Miss A. That it suited my purpose to tell that tale. There, that's in confidence. Now, I want you to tell me clearly about all this muddle Bruce has got into. I came here to find out.

Quayne. To help Sir Bruce?

Miss A. (*gruffly*). Oh, there's no sentiment; I'm not a bit soft-hearted, only I don't want the Kederby name pulled through the mud, that's all. Now, will you come and have a talk in the garden?

Quayne. It would hardly be professional—as *his* solicitor!

Miss A. (*in exasperated tones*). As *my* solicitor, then?

Quayne (*offering his arm*). Delighted!

Miss A. I shall, I think, find you sensible. Come along!

(*Exit both* R.U.E.)

(*Door opens* R.I.E. Ronnie *enters. Piano off* L. *has started again. Enter* Dolly *and* Hook *through windows* L.U.E.)

Ronnie. I've been wondering where you two were!

Hook. We've been enjoying the rhododendrons by moonlight.

Dolly (*coming down stage*). Nora still at it—who's with her? We've just seen the old lady strolling with Mr. Quayne. Lucky man that!

Ronnie (*going* L.I.E.); Let's come along in and see. Jove, she plays rippingly!

(*Exit* L.I.E., *followed by* Dolly.)

(Hook *strolls up stage to windows* R.U.E. *He looks out intently.*)

Hook (*lighting a cigarette*). There they are, arm in arm, she happier than she's ever been before! And I've made her think I don't care. Don't care! It was pretty tough work, but what's the odds if she's happy. I'd do a jolly sight more—yes, a jolly sight—— (*Stops suddenly as he turns and sees* Seaton.)

(*Enter* Seaton.)

Seaton. Hook!

Hook. What, Seaton! What on earth are you doing here?

(*They shake hands.*)

Seaton. I came over with Quayne.

Hook. Well, I am glad to see you. Come and have a drink in the billiard room, and we'll chow together, or would you rather sit here and smoke? (*Producing a cigar case and offering it to him.*)

Seaton (*taking cigar, sitting down* L.). Thanks, it is very pleasant here!

Hook. Well, I am glad to see you. How did you leave the boys down under? (*Sits* R.C.)

Seaton. Some of them doing well. Some gone to the devil and others going, just as I was going after that trouble of mine out there. Hook, old

chap, I've never had an opportunity of telling you what you saved me from. I should have been worse than any one of them, had you not pulled me up in time. I have never told you my history. Some day I may. But for the present I am in your debt all along the line, and when the time comes—(*rises and shaking hands with* Hook) and it may, one never knows—you have only to ask and I am yours, all the way.

Hook. Oh, that's all right; I am glad you pulled round.

(*Enter* Wynne, *who walks slowly down.* Seaton *has his back to him, and is engaged in lighting a cigar.* Hook *turns to* Wynne.)

Ah, we've been wanting you, Sir Christopher! Here's another man from Australia.

Seaton. Oh, really, I wonder if I know him!

(Seaton *rises from his seat, and faces* Wynne. *They both give a start of recognition;* Wynne *draws back with a scowl;* Seaton *places his hands behind his back and smiles.*)

Hook (*staring at them in surprise, mechanically*). Mr. Seaton—Sir Christopher Wynne.

(*Door opens* L.I.E., *and* Dolly *enters, followed by* Colonel. Wynne *moves down stage quickly.*)

Colonel. Ah, so you two have got together at last!

Seaton (*slowly*). Yes, we've met at last!

Colonel (*crossing to* Wynne, *who has come down stage* R.). Kit, my boy, is this right what they have been telling me?

Wynne (*nervously*). About Madge?

(Colonel *nods.*)

Yes, with your consent, sir.

Colonel (*shaking hands, warmly*). Delighted to give it, Kit. Nothing could have pleased me better!

(MADGE *enters* R.U.E.; *she sees* WYNNE *with* COLONEL, *comes hesitatingly down stage to fountain.* SEATON *is looking intently across to* WYNNE. *As* MADGE *comes opposite to him, he looks at her.*)

DOLLY (*crosses to* WYNNE). Best wishes, Kit.

WYNNE (*biting his lips, summoning a smile*). Thanks!

SEATON (*to* MADGE). Though a comparative stranger, I trust you will allow me to add my congratulations.

MADGE. It is very good of you! (*Shakes hands and sits on seat* L.)

(*They go on talking;* SEATON *shoots a hesitating glance at* WYNNE, *when his face hardens.* HOOK *is standing behind them; he watches* SEATON *with a puzzled glance.*)

DOLLY (*to* COLONEL). We never had the hundred up you promised me, Sir Bruce!

COLONEL. We mustn't have any "breaks" in our billiard promises, must we? Are you game now?

DOLLY. Did you ever know me back out, Sir Bruce?

(COLONEL *laughs, and they make their exit* R.I.E.)

(WYNNE *sits down by table* R. *and picks up a newspaper.* HOOK *up stage* L. MADGE *has sat down on seat* L. SEATON *is standing before her.*)

SEATON (*to* MADGE, *with a short laugh*). Yes, Miss Kederby, smooth enough in your case, I admit. But sometimes the course of true love takes a very crooked turn.

MADGE. Oh, not so very often, surely.

SEATON. I came across a case in point a few days ago; it was rather interesting. Shall I tell you?

MADGE. Do, please.

SEATON (*puffing his cigar, deliberately*). It began

this way: two men who had gone to seek their fortune abroad came together in one of those places where fortunes are supposed to be made.

(Wynne *sits* L.)

They were both down on their luck, both Englishmen. So they chummed, fought the world together, shared the few ha'pence, endured the more than plentiful kicks! Are you interested?

Madge. Very, please go on!

(*At table down stage* R. Wynne *is listening eagerly.*)

Seaton. Well, there were only a few years between them; they got on fairly well together, considering they were failures. Then one day the elder fell in love with a girl out there; she was just a pretty slip of a girl, the daughter of an old schoolmaster. He fell deeply, really in love with her, and she returned it. Immediately the dream he had of becoming rich fell away from him; all he desired was a small competence, and marriage out there with the slip of a girl.

Madge. And did it come to pass?

Seaton. It was rather curious! The younger man, the "chum" of course, shared the other's confidences.

(Madge *looks up quickly.*)

The chum becomes suddenly possessed of great wealth, left him by a relative, and prepares to clear out. About this time the elder man goes up country about a job he was in hopes of getting. In his absence the chum, instead of clearing out, devotes his attention to the girl; remember, his position is changed, he is now a rich man. The result—he turns the girl's head, secures her love! She writes the other man a letter telling him of it.

Madge. How mean! And did she marry the younger man?

SEATON (*throwing down cigarette*). No, he was only amusing himself! He was fascinated with her pretty face; when he tired he left abruptly—she broke her heart!

MADGE (*looking up at* SEATON). Oh! How did it all end?

SEATON. The end! The elder man came back; he would not have minded her marrying the other if it would have made her happy; you see he loved her so. But he found her broken-hearted; she could not love him again. (*Pause, slowly.*) A few months afterwards she vanished, a wasted life, wasted for nothing! (*Looking at* WYNNE.)

(WYNNE'S *face down stage has grown very stern; he is controlling himself with an effort.* HOOK *is also watching with curiosity.*)

MADGE. Oh, it is cruel, cruel!

SEATON (*his tone quickening*). Now, the elder man, the man whose happiness was ruined, is back in England; things came right for him also, that is, right in a certain way. I often wonder if he were to meet the other face to face what revenge he would take. Do you think he would be justified in taking revenge, Miss Kederby?

(WYNNE *rises to his feet and turns towards them, his feet agitated.* HOOK *stares at him with strained face.*)

MADGE (*firmly*). I think any revenge would be justified.

SEATON (*quickly*). You think that? (*Slips his hand into his pocket and produces a photograph.*) Then look on this; it is the picture of the man who stole——

(*He holds it out. With a sudden movement* HOOK *dashes forward and tears it from him.*)

HOOK (*fiercely*). There's no need; I'm not going to lie!

SEATON. Yes, but Hook——

(Seaton *starts back with an exclamation;* Hook *clutches him by the sleeve.* Madge *rises too, crosses to* Wynne *fearfully.*)

Hook. I admit it—admit it all! And you've had your revenge before my friends, haven't you?

(Seaton *looks slowly round at* Wynne; Madge *has linked her arm within his.*)

You thought I did not recognize you in that beard, but I knew you at once, knew what you were going to do directly you began! Are you satisfied?

(Seaton *stands undecided.* Hook's *tone changes.*)

You've stopped my career here; but I deserve it, more than deserve it! (*Sinks down on seat, buries his face in his hands.*)

Wynne. But, Hook——

Madge (*pulling* Wynne's *arm*). Come, Kit dear!

(Wynne *is staring wildly at the pair;* Hook *looks up suddenly at* Seaton.)

Hook. Have you anything more to say?

Seaton (*with an effort, slowly*). No—nothing!

(Wynne *slowly allows himself to be led off by* Madge R.I.E.)

Curtain.

ACT III

SCENE.—*Same as Act I. Morning-room at Barstone Grange.*

TIME.—*Three months later.*

The room is in darkness as the curtain rises, the French windows up stage L. *being closed and the curtains drawn. The room has a somewhat forlorn appearance; the ornaments, photos and trifles personal to the Kederbys have vanished, and only the bare furniture and pictures remain. An auctioneer's bill announcing sale is hanging over fireplace.*

(RODD *enters* R.I.E., *stumps across and pulls the curtains aside, letting in the morning sunshine; he opens the window wide.*)

RODD (*looking round, giving his leg a contented smack*). This is good, Rodd, my boy! I never thought as 'ow I should be back here. (*Crossing over to fireplace and taking hold of bill.*) The place sold, lock, stock and barrel not a month ago, and 'ere I am back again with the new proprietor. Gad! you could have knocked me over with a feather. I looked as stoopid as a noo recruity when she sent for me and told me the noos! (*Tearing down the bill and putting it in fireplace, picking up poker.*) Jove! we're going to live once more; live! I feel that young and light-hearted, I'd like to be in front of the devils again! (*Lunging with poker.*) There, there!

(*Enter* MISS AGATHA R. *She has in her hand a vase and a duster.* RODD *suddenly stops.*)

MISS A. Playing the fool again! (*With candlesticks, puts them on table.*)

RODD. Beg pardon, ma'am! Mere exooberance of spirits; I'm a boy at heart this morning.

MISS A. You're in your second childhood! (*Going to table.*) This is the last room, isn't it? (*Picking up candlesticks off table and putting them on mantelpiece.*)

RODD (*coming to table*) The very last, ma'am. The others are as bright and fresh as the day we left. Mrs. Swan 'as been working like the very dev—— (*Stops himself as* MISS AGATHA *stares at him*), most conscientiously, ma'am.

MISS A. Get the things that were brought up this morning.

RODD. Nothing could bring greater pleasure to my old 'eart!

MISS A. Do as you're told, and don't talk so much.

(RODD *salutes and makes his exit jauntily* R. MISS AGATHA *crosses with vase to piano* L. *She dusts the top briskly.* QUAYNE *enters through windows. He sees* MISS AGATHA, *and comes down stage quickly with a smile.*)

QUAYNE. Good-morning, Miss Kederby! Glad to see you back. You carried it through beautifully.

MISS A. My solicitors bought it without giving any details?

QUAYNE (*laughing*). Yes.

MISS A. Good! Now about my brother? (*Coming from fire.*) Is he straight now?

QUAYNE. Yes, I'm glad to say he is. With the money he got from the sale of the Grange he has cleared off all his liabilities, and doesn't owe a penny. Miss Madge, of course, is provided for.

MISS A. Not badly, either. Thirty thousand a year!

QUAYNE (*thoughtfully*). But Sir Bruce would not trade on that!

Miss A. No—he's a fool where money is concerned, but he's a Kederby all through. And I'm not sorry. He wouldn't have accepted the money even from me, so I had to get round him by playing this trick. (*Gruffly.*) Given me a lot of trouble.

Quayne (*looking at her thoughtfully*). I think you rather like it.

Miss A. (*sharply*). Like what?

Quayne. Oh, doing good by stealth, shall we say.

Miss A. (*angrily*). Doing good! Do you think I'm doing this for his sake?

Quayne. I shouldn't be surprised.

Miss A. Then you're an idiot! I never do good intentionally. (*Putting candlesticks on mantelpiece.*)

Quayne. Still we all make mistakes sometimes. (*Laughing.*) You took Miss Banter into your confidence?

Miss A. Yes, I had to. I got her to insist that Bruce and Madge on leaving here should stay at Mr. Banter's house until things had got settled. That girl has got her head screwed on the right way.

Quayne (*aside*). Neither of them beat about the bush much!

(*Enter* Rodd r.; *he has the* Colonel's *sword tucked under one arm, a large framed picture of* Madge *under the other, and in his hands a collection of photo frames and ornaments. He crosses to table.* Miss Agatha *comes down after* Rodd *has got to table.*)

Hullo, Rodd, glad to get back?

Rodd. Glad ain't the word, sir; it's more delirium! (*Drops his collection of things on table, takes up the picture again, rubs the glass lovingly.*) To think, sir, that in another few minutes, she 'erself——

Miss A. Don't splutter, man! Get on! (*Crosses to piano with vase.*)

Rodd (*shaking his head at* Quayne *with a knowing smile, in a whisper*). Ain't she just a treat, sir?

(Quayne *down stage glances at watch;* Dolly *enters through window. She has a basket full of fresh cut flowers; she comes down stage to table quickly.*)

Dolly. Hullo, Mr. Quayne; goin' strong? We're havin' great games this morning. You're in the know, aren't you?

Quayne. Yes, quite "in the know."

Dolly. We're simply chock full of work. (*Pointing to piano.*) Here, get me that vase, there's a good sort.

(*He obeys with a smile.*)

Miss A. (*regarding* Rodd's *work*). Do you call that straight, you—— (*Pushing* Rodd.)

Rodd (*eagerly*). Say it, ma'am; it'll do me good.

(Miss Agatha *turns away.*)

Lord, she was cut out for a drill sergeant! (*Puts picture straight.*)

Dolly (*putting flowers in vase*). Not an awful good hand at this sort of thing, you know; but still, how's that? (*Holds up vase for inspection.*)

Quayne. It's the work of a great artist.

Dolly. Pickles! Just drop it on the piano again for me, will you?

(*He does so.*)

Miss A. (*to* Rodd, *who is gazing in rapt admiration at his handiwork*). Rodd!

(*He starts, turns round and salutes hurriedly.*)

Don't stand there like a bran-filled dummy! Put the sword up. (*Goes to piano.*)

Rodd (*hurries down stage, gets sword and returns; looks at* Miss Agatha *in admiration*). What a splendid mother of soldiers she'd have made. (*Takes sword from its sheath, kisses its blade lovingly, salutes with it, then proceeds to put it in its place over the picture.*)

DOLLY (*to* QUAYNE). Did you forward that letter I sent you?

QUAYNE. I did. (*To* MISS AGATHA.) I must be going now, Miss Kederby. I'll look in again later, when Sir Bruce is here.

MISS A. Yes, you may be able to explain things better to him; he might feel grateful towards me, and I couldn't stand that.

QUAYNE (*laughing*). Very well. Au revoir, Miss Banter.

DOLLY. So long!

(*Exit* QUAYNE L.2.E.)

MISS A. Now, Rodd, get along to the smoking-room, and put the Colonel's things there all ready for him. Sharp!

RODD (*marching towards* R.I.E.). Sharp's the word, ma'am. (*Chuckling, aside.*) I'm a babby in 'er hands, reg'lar babby; but I like it. I know I shall forget myself and call her Lizzie.

(*Exit.*)

MISS A. (*dusting a photograph and putting it in position*). There is no mistake about their coming? Sir Bruce got the letter from my solicitors this morning?

DOLLY (*laughing*). Yes, it was all beautifully mysterious. He read it out to us at breakfast. At first Madge wasn't coming, but I made her promise, then slipped away, saying I wanted to see a pal about something. (*Putting vases on mantelpiece.*)

MISS A. A pal? You mean me!

DOLLY (*busy putting flowers about room*). Yes, I reckon you as a pal! You see, you took me into your confidence. (*Turning round.*) Do you know I've got quite to like you.

MISS A. (*sitting to table, smiling grimly*). And do you know that I once remarked that you were as elegant as a fishwife.

DOLLY (*smiling*). It don't matter. I know my style's bad, but it's my own. (*Going to mantelpiece with vase.*) What has happened, then; have you hedged a bit on your opinion?

MISS A. Not about the style. But I wanted some one with sense, with no sentimental nonsense about her.

DOLLY (*coming down, crossing to piano, thoughtfully, aside*). No sentimental nonsense! (*Turning with a laugh to* MISS A.) Well, I'm glad you thought of me for the job. It has been awfully entertaining. (*Putting the last photo up.*) Oh, by the way, you remember the one bargain I made?

MISS A. You said I was to invite that curious Hook person here. I left it in your hands; did you find out where he is?

DOLLY. Yes; I sent a letter through Mr. Quayne, asking him to come.

MISS A. (*glancing at her sharply*). I'm not inquisitive, but—why should you particularly want him to come here?

DOLLY (*putting photo on piano*). You remember what I told you about what I heard that night from the billiard room?

MISS A. I have forgotten. He did something rather melodramatic, didn't he? But even if he did, was it necessary for me to have him here in person?

DOLLY. Yes, very necessary. It's a question of fair play. (*Going to piano.*)

MISS A. (*glancing at her sharply*). Yes, of course, fair play, and nothing else. And how are you going to see this effected?

DOLLY. You must wait and see. (*Facing* MISS AGATHA, *impulsively.*) He's a bit rough, but he isn't a wrong 'un, really. Give each horse a fair chance, you know; that's my motto, and I think it's yours too. That's why I stuck out for having him down. (*Dusting chair* L.)

MISS A. (*rising*). I think I shall learn a new lan-

guage if I'm much longer with you. (*Crossing* R.I.E., *turning round at door.*) I didn't tell you, but as a matter of fact, I wanted to see this Hook man myself. That's why I agreed to his coming here.

DOLLY. You?

MISS A. Yes, and there's just one other I want to see—that scamp of a boy, Ronald. (*Opening door.*) I suppose I must get ready to receive that idiot brother of mine.

(*Exit.*)

DOLLY (*shaking her head*). What's up with Ronnie? (*Cross* R., *front of table to top.*) Oh, I don't catch on, not a little bit. (*Sits on edge of table, reflectively.*) Yes, I'm glad I found out what I did that night. (*Arranging the flowers in vase.*) He's real good is Dickie, and I'm not going to let Madge go on thinking he is the blackguard he made himself out to be. If Kit isn't man enough to tell her, I will. (*Getting off table, going up stage to windows.*) Yes, if I had not known, perhaps in time Dickie would—no, I've no sentimental nonsense about me. I'm a sportsman, and Dickie's goin' to have a fair run for his happiness, whether he likes it or not. (*Picks up jug and basket.*)

(*Exit through window.*)

(*Enter* RODD L.2.E., *holding door open with air of mysterious importance. Enter* COLONEL *and* MADGE.)

RODD. This way, Sir Bruce.

COLONEL. What on earth are you doing here, Rodd? (*Top of table* C.) I thought we had settled you were to be lodge keeper at the Park?

RODD. Couldn't tear myself away from the old place, sir. New owner insisted I should come too! Would take absolutely no denial, sir.

COLONEL (*to* MADGE). That mysterious new owner again! (*To* RODD.) Can't you enlighten us, Rodd?

RODD (*saluting*). First time I ever disobeyed your wish, sir; but sacred word of honour, you know, sir.

(*Cross* R. *above table.*)

COLONEL (*with a shrug, seating himself at table*). We must be patient then.

RODD (*stumping excitedly to* R.I.E.). I will announce your arrival, sir. The new owner won't be a moment. (*Opening door.*) The new owner! Ha! ha! I must see his face!

(*Exit.*)

(*The* COLONEL *is sitting at the table with his head resting on his arm, staring straight in front of him.* MADGE *glances round the room uneasily, then looks at him. She steps lightly round to him and puts her hand on his shoulder.*)

MADGE. I know it's very hard, father dear!

COLONEL. Yes, it's pretty rough coming back as a casual visitor. (*Sighing.*) Still, if one *does* make a mess of things!

MADGE. You didn't! It was only a misfortune! No one could foresee that the company would be a failure. It does not matter so much to me, dear, only I am so sorry for you!

COLONEL (*looking at her with a smile*). Brave little Madge! (*Kisses her.*) There, we mustn't quarrel with what had to be. (*Rising, twisting his moustache.*) The Kederbys never did that. (*Turning round and surveying the room.*) Still, I wonder what all this humbug means about keeping the real purchaser's name a secret. (*Turn down* L.) Don't see through it myself.

MADGE (*wanders up to fireplace*). Look, father, your sword!

COLONEL (*going up to her*). Your picture, too!

MADGE. And the photographs, the things the Banters stored for us in their lumber room.

(*They turn and face one another in bewildered fashion.*)

COLONEL. Well, the mystery's getting a trifle ludicrous, isn't it?

(RODD *enters* R.I.E., *holding door open.*)

RODD. The new owner, sir!

(MISS AGATHA *enters.* RODD *shuts the door, and hastily turns to survey the* COLONEL'S *and* MADGE'S *astonishment. He rubs his hands in glee.*)

MADGE. Aunt Agatha! (*In amazement.*)

COLONEL (*shrugging his shoulders, coming down* L.C.). Oh, I give it up!

RODD (*excitedly*). It's right enough, Sir Bruce! After all, the old 'ome!

MISS A. (R. *of table*). Rodd, leave the room!

RODD (*crestfallen, opening door*). Sarves me right! sarves me right!

(*Exit.*)

MISS A. Now, Bruce, I hate long-winded explanations, so here it is all in a nutshell. I bought the Grange because I didn't fancy its falling into some jam-maker's hands.

MADGE (L.C.). But we thought you had lost most of your money in speculation—like father.

MISS A. (R. *of table*). Bruce, was I ever so silly as you?

COLONEL (L. *of table*). Never, Agatha, never! Still, you gave us the impression of being poor—an independent old woman with a few hundreds a year—something like that, wasn't it?

MISS A. Probably. I came here because I heard you were heavily hit financially. I knew you wouldn't accept money from me, so thought of this way of doing things. (*Hastily.*) Not from any idea of helping you, only I didn't want to see the name in the mud—understand?

COLONEL. Oh, fully. (*Crosses* L.)

(MADGE *up* L.C.)

Miss A. Very well, will you come and live here with me then? Take up your old position.

Colonel. But the house will be yours! (*Down* L.)

Miss A. Yes; but you're to be the master! I couldn't bear a male Kederby taking a back seat! (*Turning away.*) There, now you know all about it—yes or no?

Madge (*going to her*). It's splendid of you, aunt.

Miss A. Don't be superfluous!

Colonel (L.C.). Hang it all, Agatha, I must say something! It is generous of you, one of the things only met with once in a lifetime.

Miss A. Yes or no, Bruce?

Colonel (*with a shrug*). Of course, yes.

Miss A. Then go into your study. There are some papers waiting for you to sign. The sooner we get these bothering little things over, the sooner we can resume our normal position.

Colonel (*hurriedly to* R.I.E.). Oh, a normal position is everything! I hardly know whether I'm on my head or my heels! (*Opens door.*)

(*Exit* R.I.E.)

Madge (*crossing* R.C. *to* Miss Agatha, *touching her on the arm*). Aunt!

Miss A. (*turning round sharply*). Well?

Madge. Do let me thank you. You don't know how happy you have made me.

Miss A. Why? You will soon be leaving here!

Madge. It nearly broke father's heart to give up the Grange; he was so brave, he did not show it, but I knew! I love him so much, and—now I love you! You'll let me, won't you?

(*Gently yet half fearfully she puts her arm round* Miss Agatha's *neck. There is a pause, then* Miss Agatha *suddenly bends and kisses her lightly. She draws back at once, and releases herself from* Madge's *embrace.*)

Miss A. (*gruffly*). That's not to become a habit, mind!

(*Exit.*)

Madge (r.c., *laughing*). The old dear! (*Taking off hat at fireplace, crossing to table, picking up photo.*) It was the one thing wanting to complete my happiness. (*Taking off hat.*) Oh, it is lovely to be back home again.

(*Enter* Dolly *through window quickly;* Madge *turns, puts hat on chair.*)

Dolly. Hullo, Madge!

Madge. Dolly! (*Running forward and taking her hands.*) Why, you must have known all along! (*Crosses above table.*)

Dolly (*goes below table, laughing*). Yes, the old lady put me in the know and we worked it together. I tell you what, Madge, your aunt is a first-class sort, although she does hit out straight from the shoulder.

Madge. I can hardly believe it all yet! (*Going to piano.*)

(*They wander down stage together;* Dolly *picks a flower out of vase on table, and fingers it reflectively.* Madge *looks at* Kit's *photo.*)

Dolly. Any news of Kit?

Madge (*smiling*). Yes, at last I've had a letter; he hopes to be back to-morrow. It was too bad to become engaged, then immediately for him to be called away to Paris to attend to that bothering French property his uncle left him. Still, it's over now, and I shall have him all to myself.

Dolly (*plucking the flower to bits slowly*). Yes, it will be good. Still, you heard almost every day from him, I suppose.

Madge. No, hardly at all. He's a most shocking correspondent, even to me. (*Laughing.*) I shall take him to task about it.

(DOLLY *turns and walks up stage towards window.*) It will be nice to be back here again when he comes.

(*She crosses to piano* L., *and sings a short love song.*)

(DOLLY *up stage has turned and is watching her hesitatingly, with one hand on the curtain. Suddenly as if she has made up her mind, she takes a step to go down to her. She is on the* R. *side of windows. She draws back as a shadow falls across the path outside. The next moment* WYNNE *appears at window; he sees* MADGE *at once, and does not notice* DOLLY, *who has drawn back still further and hides behind curtain. He looks pale and worried; he steps into the room noiselessly, and pauses a moment, then bracing his shoulders with an effort, goes down stage.* DOLLY, *who has been watching his face, slips quietly away through window.* WYNNE *pauses on the right side of table.* MADGE *turns, sees him, comes towards him with a glad cry of "Kit"; something in his face impels her to stop; they face each other, the table between them.*)

MADGE. I say, Dolly! Kit!

WYNNE (*speaking in a low, restrained voice*). I heard you were here again, and came on at once. (*He turns and faces her with an effort.*) I——

MADGE (*stretching out her hands*). It's delightful, Kit, to have you a day sooner. I've been—— (*She lays her hand on the front of his coat.*)

(*He pushes her gently from him and turns away. She sinks into chair* L. *side of table, watching him wonderingly.*)

WYNNE. You mustn't touch me! (*Pause, then bursting out.*) Madge, I'm going to hurt you. It's better to be done now, it ought to have been done before, only I've been such a coward.

MADGE. Kit! What's happened?

WYNNE (*dropping into chair* R. *side of table, covering his face in his hands*). I'm not worthy of you, not

the man you thought me. (*Pause, speaking between his teeth.*) You remember the night that man Seaton told you of his partner's treachery, had his revenge on Hook before us all?

Madge. Yes, yes?

Wynne. Hook wasn't the man; he took it upon himself, because he wished to spare you.

Madge. To spare me! Why?

Wynne. To spare you; can't you guess?

Madge (*taking a step towards him, looking at him searchingly.*) No, Kit, it was not—don't say it was!

(Wynne *bows his head.* Madge *sinks back into her seat with a sob.*)

Wynne. The thing came so suddenly, I hardly had time to think! I was so certain Seaton was going to revenge himself on me; then, when Hook stepped in with the lie, took it on his shoulders, and Seaton, for some reason, out of pity for you, perhaps, did not speak, I somehow—oh, I know it's no excuse—but the thought of losing you unmanned me. I knew you would turn from me.

Madge (*sits* l. *of table, speaking in a low voice*). You were the man who stole the girl's love from your friend, made a plaything of her, then deserted her!

Wynne. She did not love him—never did, but he did not know. The moment Seaton left to go up country, I—oh, there is no use telling the miserable story. There is more reason now, God knows, that you should believe his story rather than mine. (*Walks across to* l.) Directly I had let Seaton go that night without speaking, I felt what a coward I'd been. I had let another man sacrifice his honour to save mine. Every day since has been a torture! I could not write to you; every time I took up my pen something seemed to whisper to me—Coward, coward, coward! There was only one end! (*Turning up stage.*)

MADGE (*repeating words mechanically*). Only one end?

WYNNE. This: to make a clean breast of it. Madge, to have killed your love like this means more to me than you can guess—more than you can ever know. There is only one thing to atone. To go away. I shall see your father now and tell him everything—then leave for good.

MADGE (*rising*). It's all so sudden; I can't grasp it all yet.

WYNNE. You must try and forget; that's all that can be done.

(*A voice is heard off* L., *then door* L.2.E. *opens an inch or so.*)

RONNIE (*off*). Rodd, hurry up; I want to see the governor. (*Door shut again.*)

MADGE (*moving towards* R., *below table*). Ronnie here? I can't see him now!

WYNNE. Good-bye, all I can hope is that one day you may forget.

MADGE (*looking at him, then turning away with a sob*). And I was so happy! Oh, Kit, Kit!

(*Exit.*)

(WYNNE *shuts door and crosses* C. *as* RONNIE *enters hurriedly* L.2.E.)

RONNIE. Hullo, Kit, old chap! So you've got back? (*Shaking hands.*)

WYNNE (*turning away*). Yes, I've got back.

RONNIE. Suppose you've heard the news about Aunt Agatha—how after all she's a regular Croesus? She wired me to come this morning. Where is she, and the governor, and Madge?

WYNNE. I saw Sir Bruce and Miss Kederby in the study as I passed. Madge—has just left here. (*Crosses* R.I.E.)

RONNIE (*not noticing* WYNNE'S *restrained voice, rattling on*). Well, I'd better run and see the old

folks first; will come back in a minute or so, old chap!

(*Exit* R.I.E. *at a run.*)

(Wynne *stands* C. *with folded arms, his brow knitted in thought.* Dolly *appears at window, sees him, comes down stage quietly.* Wynne *unfolds his arms, draws a deep breath, turns round and sees* Dolly; *she comes to him, looking at his face intently.*)

Dolly. You've done it, Kit? (*He starts.*) Oh, it's no good beating about the bush. I know about the Seaton affair. You didn't play the game that night, Kit Wynne; but now——

Wynne. Yes, I've told her. It means giving her up, but I've told her—and I'm glad.

Dolly. I'm rather glad, too. (*Comes down* L.) I didn't fancy having to do the job myself.

Wynne. You would have done it? Why?

Dolly. Because I like to see the game played square. Because there was another man—as good as yourself, Kit.

Wynne. Better! better!

Dolly. Better then, and he was done out of his chance.

Wynne (*coming down* L.). I'm not asking with any thought of myself, mind; I know I've put myself out of the running, but—is he to have it now?

(*Door opens* L.I.R. Rodd's *voice heard.* Wynne *starts and looks at* Dolly.)

Rodd. This way, Mr. Hook.

Dolly. Yes, he is. Remember, he deserves it. Play the man, Kit.

(Rodd *enters, followed by* Hook. Wynne *turns and walks* R. Dolly *goes to meet* Hook. Rodd *crosses stage and exits* R.I.E.)

Dolly. Hullo, Dickie! How are you, old chap?

HOOK (*cheerily*). Hullo, Dolly! (*Pauses in the act of shaking hands.*) I suppose you are on shaking terms with me?

DOLLY. Of course, else I shouldn't have sent for you. What have you been doing with yourself all this while?

HOOK. Oh, town and fun—fun all the way. (*Sees* WYNNE, *aside.*) Wynne!

WYNNE (*turns and crosses half way, holds out his hand*). Are you on shaking terms with *me*?

HOOK (*shoots a quick glance at* DOLLY). Why, certainly, Sir Christopher, if you'll do me the honour.

WYNNE. It is you who do me the honour.

HOOK (*pretending to mistake his meaning, shaking hands warmly*). I am getting on with the aristocracy, ain't I, what!

DOLLY (*comes down* L.; *after looking at* WYNNE *she touches* HOOK *on the arm*). Dickie, when you left the Grange that night, well, things looked rather up against you, didn't they?

HOOK (*looks significantly at* WYNNE). Yes, very clumsy of me, you know; still, couldn't help it—I was found out!

DOLLY (*quickly*). Yes, you were found out, Dickie!

(HOOK *turns to her with a start.*)

WYNNE (*facing him bravely*). Hook, I've told Madge everything.

HOOK. What was the good of my trying to help you? Heaven helps those who help themselves, but who can help the man who gives the helper away?

WYNNE. It had to be done! (*Taking hat off table.*) I'm going away now—right away—do you understand? I shan't be happy, but I shall feel better, knowing I have put you right with her. It must have been pretty hard for you all this time, to know *she* thought you were the man.

HOOK (*with affected airiness*). Didn't worry me

—haven't given it a thought—I didn't, really. (*Down* L.)

WYNNE (*cross to* HOOK). You are the most generous man I have ever met!

(DOLLY *crosses to fireplace.*)

But it's your turn now—you deserve it. (*With an effort, holding out his hand.*) I wish you good luck! You see, I understand—good luck!

(*The two men shake hands, then* WYNNE *turns and walks slowly towards the windows.* HOOK *stares after him, dumbfounded. As* WYNNE *passes through the windows, he makes a start as if to go after him.* DOLLY *lays a restraining hand on him.*)

HOOK (*calling*). Here, Wynne, look here——

DOLLY (*sits* R. *of table*). Let him go, Dickie. He's right—it's his turn to go.

(HOOK *sinks down into a chair by the table and runs his finger round inside his collar.*)

HOOK. Phew! If I'd known it was going to let me in for more scenes, I wouldn't have come. So I've got to thank you for this, have I? You write and tell me that old Miss Kederby has bought the place now and would like to see me. I wouldn't have minded meeting even her; but all the rest, and more scenes. It wasn't quite the thing—with a pal?

DOLLY. If Kit hadn't told her, I was going to tell her myself! I knew all the time!

HOOK (*rising, with a sigh*). Oh, woman, woman! (*Down* L., *turning suddenly on her.*) What have you done it for, eh?

DOLLY (*rises and goes to* HOOK). Because I know you love her—because, despite all your talk of having fun all the way, you've been as miserable in London as a man jolly well can be.

HOOK. You should have seen me at the Empire two nights ago! (*Seriously.*) Has she given him up?

Dolly (*moves back to table*). You heard what he said; he is going away—right away, there's a clear field for you. Go in, old man, and win.

Hook (*thoughtfully*). A clear field!

Dolly. Yes, with the odds all on you. You see, I don't understand love myself; it's out of my line.

Hook. Yes, quite out of your line! (*Cross* L.)

Dolly (*moving towards* R.). But a good many seem to think it's the only prize worth drawing. You're one of 'em, Dickie, so now you've got your chance, do your level best.

Hook (*raising his voice*). Jove, yes, I'll do my level best! (*Moving up* L.)

Dolly (*pausing at door, turning round for a moment*). And when you're happy, Dickie, you won't forget the pal who brought you to it. I'm off to find Madge. So long, and good luck!

(*Exit* R.I.E.)

Hook (*cross above table* R.C.). Forget you, Dolly, not me! You've been a pal all the way. (*Looking* R., *with a smile.*) Your chance now! (*Stands for a moment, then shakes his head.*) No, thank you; no, Dickie, my boy! You were blinded once, not again, not while I'm looking, anyhow.

(*Enter* Miss Agatha R.I.E., *followed by* Rodd.)

Miss A. (*to* Rodd). Tell Mr. Ronald I want him here!

Rodd. With pleasure, ma'am—with pleasure!

(*Exit.*)

Miss A. (*crossing* C., *sits* L. *of table*). How d'ye do?

Hook (*turning to her*). Ah, good-morning. I trust I find you in good health! (*Coming down* L.)

Miss A. (*sitting down and contemplating him*). I am always in good health; I was brought up properly.

Hook. Ah, there's a lot in that. Give a child fresh air, good diet, plenty of stick—— (*Stopping*

suddenly, nervously.) We've been having some nice weather lately!

Miss A. Have you any idea why I sent for you?

Hook. Not in the least! Oh, perhaps——

Miss A. No, I did not want to be entertained. I don't motor, and I haven't read *The Morals of Cynthia.*

Hook (*aside*). I thought she wouldn't forget to rub that in! (*To* Miss Agatha, *with laborious politeness.*) Well, perhaps you will tell me.

Miss A. I wished to say that, until quite recently, I did not fully understand all the ramifications of your connexion with our family.

Hook (*helplessly*). No; I don't know what you are talking about. (*To* Miss Agatha, *shaking his head.*) No good, ma'am. I simply don't—that's all.

(*Enter* Ronnie *quickly* R.I.E. *He starts at seeing* Hook.)

Ronnie (R.C.). Hook!

Hook. Yes, but I don't think you ought to be here! I'm being interviewed about some "ramifications."

Miss A. It's quite right. My nephew is the ramification.

Hook. Well, I've never noticed that before. How are you? (*Crossing to* Ronnie, *catches him by the arm.*) Tell me, what is it? (*Lowering his voice.*) Surely not the——?

Ronnie (*hurriedly*). I couldn't help it; she overheard me saying something about it to Madge the day after you left. (*Goes up* R.)

Miss A. (*loudly*). I have learnt without much surprise, it is true, that my nephew has been foolish enough to lose a considerable sum through gambling. I understand that you were foolish enough to lend him the money to pay his debts.

Hook. We none of us can help being stupid, ma'am.

(Miss Agatha *rises and walks round to desk.*)

(*To* Ronnie.) I trusted you to keep it dark.

Ronnie (*aside to* Hook). What could I do ? She absolutely insisted.

(Miss Agatha *has risen and crossed to desk* R. ; *she opens her cheque book, and tears out a cheque already filled in. She turns round in her seat and looks at* Hook.)

Miss A. I wasn't about at the time, but now—you understand it would be pleasanter to keep a thing like this in the family. (*Holds cheque out.*)

Hook (*to* Ronnie). You, you idiot ! (*To* Miss Agatha.) I've learnt it's beastly bad form to talk about your own money ; but it was nothing to me—it was a gift.

Miss A. Take it !

Ronnie. Yes, take it, Hook ! (*To* Miss Agatha.) It's awfully generous of you, aunt ! I don't know how to thank you sufficiently.

Miss A. There's no call for gratitude ! You've got to pay every penny of it back, and very probably interest at five per cent. too.

(Ronnie *turns away with a shrug.*)

Don't waste my time, please.

Hook (*taking it reluctantly, gazing at it*). I suppose I must.

Miss A. Of course ! Whatever else I may be, I'm a business woman !

Hook (*crossing to her, points to cheque*). Er—well—then you might sign it.

(Miss Agatha *looks at it sharply, then almost snatches it away from* Hook *and signs it quickly.* Ronnie *goes into a fit of suppressed laughter.*)

(*Aside to* Ronnie.) I think I got her there, what !

Miss A. (*returning cheque to* Hook). I had made

it out previously and did not wish to leave it about signed. You will find it correct now.

Hook (*cramming it carelessly into pocket, cheerily*). Oh, I daresay, I daresay!

Miss A. (*rising and coming down* R.). All that remains now is to thank you for the interest you have been good enough to take in our family, and——

Hook. Wish me "good-morning," I suppose.

Miss A. No, ask you to stay to lunch. (*Holding out her hand.*) Will you?

Hook (*grasping it, surprised*). Delighted, absolutely delighted.

Miss A. You will excuse me entertaining you for a few minutes.

Hook. She's at it again!

Miss A. You'll find people about the house and garden! If you don't say anything silly to them, they'll say something silly to you!

(*Exit* R.I.E.)

Hook (*looking after her*). What a philosopher! (*Sits front of table.*)

Ronnie (*goes to* Hook, *laughing*). She's a brick in her own way. Hook, she must have taken a fancy to you to invite you to lunch. It's funny after—— (*He stops suddenly and glances at* Hook *in a confused manner. Crosses* R.)

Hook (*quietly*). Say it out! You wonder that she should do so after what occurred that night? Isn't that so?

Ronnie (*confused*). Well, I—that is——

(Hook *is smiling.*)

Why, what is it; was there some mistake after all?

Hook. Yes, there was some—misunderstanding. I fancy your aunt must have guessed it, that's all! (*Turns and walks up stage towards window.*)

Ronnie (*following him*). By Jove, I'm glad! I never really thought it of you, Hook. The man and

the thing didn't go together, somehow. Won't you tell me about it?

HOOK. No, not that. You see, it's not quite all mine to tell. What do you say to a stroll in the garden?

RONNIE. Right!

(*He links his arm within* HOOK'S, *and the two are just about to step through the windows when* DOLLY *and* MADGE *enter* R.I.E. DOLLY *has her arm affectionately round* MADGE.)

DOLLY. I thought it best to rout you out, Madge!

(HOOK *turns and sees* MADGE. *Looking up stage he disengages his arm.*)

HOOK (*aside to* RONNIE). We'll take that stroll by and bye, Ronnie.

(MADGE *and* DOLLY *see the others.* MADGE *gives a little start.*)

DOLLY (*going up stage quickly to* RONNIE). Say, Ronnie, your aunt tells me she has bought a new gee for the Colonel. Take me round the stable, there's a good boy!

RONNIE. Why, of course, come along!

(DOLLY *looks at* HOOK *and* MADGE *laughingly.*)

(RONNIE *makes his exit through windows.*)

(MADGE *walks slowly* C. DOLLY *pauses at window,* HOOK *is near her.*)

DOLLY (*aside to* HOOK). Now's your chance, Dickie! Level best, remember!

HOOK. Aye, aye! Level best! (*He turns down stage.*)

(DOLLY *gives one last glance, then with a shrug makes her exit.*)

(HOOK *comes slowly down stage.* MADGE *turns, and they face one another. There is a pause.*)

HOOK (*putting hand to his head nervously*). Charming weather for this time of year——

(MADGE *puts out her hand impulsively; he breaks off suddenly and shakes it warmly.*)

Ah, that's good, that's good!

MADGE (*half whisperingly*). I might have known you would never have done a thing like that! (*Turning away sorrowfully.*) You wanted to let me keep my happiness, and acted nobly; I can only thank you—thank you very much.

HOOK (*jerkily*). I wish you wouldn't; I somehow don't seem to care much for thanks just now.

MADGE (*seating herself at table, speaking with her head turned away from* HOOK). You know—he told me himself—this morning.

HOOK. Yes, remember that; it's a great thing. (*Significantly.*) He told you himself.

MADGE (*speaking in mechanical tones*). And you have come back—you, who have done so much to prove your love!

HOOK (*taking a step forward; her back is towards him*). You must not think of that, little lady! That belongs to the past; it is all done with. I know now what I'm fit for, and it isn't to be your husband.

MADGE (*turning away, with a sob*). And he is going away—he said so! (*Going up* R. *to armchair.*)

HOOK. Yes, that's what he ought to do—atone for his fault like a man. But you—what are you going to do?

(MADGE *does not answer; she is sobbing.*)

I'm only a rough card, but I want to see you happy. I knew it would come to this some time or other, and that's why I came down. I knew, and I haven't been idle all this time in London—regular busy I've been, one way and another.

MADGE (*looking up*). Busy?

Hook (R. *of table*). After that night we talked a lot about Seaton's affair, and presently I sent a cable or two, and got answers.

Madge. What did you discover?

Hook. The girl wasn't worth it! She was only playing with Seaton; she never loved him, could never love any one.

Madge. But does Mr. Seaton know this?

Hook. He does now, and asked me to tell you.

Madge. If I only knew what to do!

Hook. Do as your heart tells you to.

Madge. Ah, if I only knew what was right!

(*Exit through windows, then* R.)

Hook (*looking after her*). Another minute's conversation, and it will be all right.

(*Enter* Dolly *behind him; touches him on the arm.*)

Dolly. How's it going, Dickie?

Hook (*turning round, pause, then shaking her suddenly by the hand*). Splendid, I think! Result not yet out!

(*Exit after* Madge.)

Dolly (*entering room with a shrug*). Well, he deserves his win if any man does.

(*Enter* Colonel *and* Miss Agatha R.I.E.)

Miss A. That's enough of it, Bruce! If you did find your favourite brand of cigar in the smoking room, what then? Any one would think I had put them there to please you.

Dolly (*laughing*). So she did, Sir Bruce! Those cigars cost her no end of trouble to get, but she was dead set on 'em.

(*Enter* Ronnie.)

Colonel (*laughing*). A woman who can buy a man's cigars satisfactorily is a woman in a thousand!

My dear Agatha, you have once more proved your sterling worth.

Miss A. Bruce, your conversation is approaching the nauseating!

Ronnie (*to* Colonel). I say, dad, have you seen the gee Aunt Agatha has got you in place of Minstrel? He's a regular ripper.

Colonel (*to* Miss Agatha, *much gratified*). What, more surprises, Agatha? Really there is no end to your——

Miss A. If you wish to bore me to death, Bruce, say so. (*Sits on sofa.*)

(*Enter* Wynne *quickly through windows; he comes to a halt, and hesitates when he sees the others.*)

Colonel. Why, Kit, I did not know you had returned.

Wynne. Yes, I got back this morning.

Colonel, (*shaking hands with him*). Delighted to have you with us again, dear boy!

Wynne (*crossing to* Miss Agatha, *awkwardly*). How do you do, Miss Kederby?

Miss A. I enjoy the best of health, thank you. (*Crosses* c.)

Ronnie. I say, dad, you really must see the gee! (*Taking hold of his arm.*) He's a beauty. Come along, Dolly.

Dolly. Rather; you can't bore me with a horse.

(*Exit with* Ronnie.)

Colonel. I think I must go. But you must come too, Agatha! I insist!

Miss A. Very well; but mind, I vanish on hearing a single word of thanks! (*Follows* Colonel.)

Colonel. My dear Agatha, I promise to be ungratefulness itself! (*Offers his arm to* Miss Agatha; *looks round at* Wynne.) Won't you come, Kit?

Wynne. No, thanks, I—I rather want to have a word alone with you later; I'll wait in the library.

COLONEL. Oh, very well! I'll return presently.

(*Exit with* MISS AGATHA.)

(HOOK *appears on path up stage; looks off* L., *then to* WYNNE. *Enters room.*)

HOOK. Hi, Sir Christopher! (*Coming down* L.C.)

WYNNE (*pausing with hand on door*). Yes?

HOOK. Like to say a word to you—congratulations!

WYNNE. You've got what you deserve. (*Crosses* C.)

HOOK. Well, not yet; but I've just had a talk with the little lady, by the fountain. You know the fountain; nice pretty old fountain, isn't it?

WYNNE (C.). Yes. It was there, Hook, I first told her that I loved her.

HOOK (L.C.). Wouldn't it be rather a good idea if you were to tell her so again—there?

WYNNE (*starting*). What do you mean, Hook?

HOOK. It just occurred to me, you know. I'm thundering good at ideas. (*Changing his tone, catching hold of* WYNNE'S *hand.*) Look here, we've straightened the skein a bit! She still loves you.

WYNNE (C.). Still loves me! After——

HOOK. Yes; wonderful, ain't it? But that's how a woman's built. (*Leading him towards window.*) She still loves you, and that's all there is to it! (*Goes up* L.C.) So get along right away.

WYNNE (*turning*). But you—— (*Follows him up.*)

HOOK. Oh, that was a long time ago. I'm all right; just you wait and see. She's there, I tell you, and by the fountain. Go on, what are you waiting here for?

WYNNE (*at windows*). By Jove, you're a brick! (*Turns round and grasps* HOOK'S *hand impulsively.*)

(*Exit.*)

HOOK (*looks off* R., *after him*). Well, that's all gay! (*Coming down.*)

(Miss Agatha *comes along the path* L. Hook *swings round, and they face one another.*)

Miss A. And what's "all gay"?

Hook. Kit and Madge are together again.

Miss A. (*up* L.C., *entering room*). Of course! What a pack of sentimental fools you all are, with heroic notions of giving up things for each other's sakes. Thank Heaven I'm not sentimental.

Hook. No, she ain't.

Miss A. (*turns and goes back to windows; looks at* Hook). What are you going to do?

Hook. That's funny, everybody's asking me that.

Miss A. (*looking off path* L.). Here's my pal again. (*Looks at* Hook *as if with sudden inspiration.*) I've an idea. Get into that chair there.

Hook. Not me; I had enough of that chair once before.

Miss A. Do as I tell you, else——

Hook. Well, what?

Miss A. No lunch! Quick!

Hook. That settles it. (*Goes to chair.*) I'm in it again.

(*Enter* Dolly *quickly.*)

Miss A. (*at chair* L. *of table*). Well, how has your precious scheme worked out?

Dolly (L.C., *sitting at piano*). Oh, Kit Wynne played the man—told her and has given her up. Quite the right thing; he is going clean away.

Miss A. (*with a sniff*). Oh, is he? (*Giving glance at chair.*) And this Hook, this utter creature, is to be transformed into a tinsel imitation hero and carry all before him with flying colours.

Dolly. He loves her, and has done a lot to show it. He's a good 'un, and any happiness he gets he more than deserves. (*At piano.*)

Miss A. And why should you be so extremely anxious to secure this—(*another glance at chair*)—this person's happiness for him?

DOLLY (*nervously*). I told you once. I'm a good sportsman, and like to see a race fairly run. Dickie Hook deserves to win, and I wanted to help him—that's all the reason.

MISS A. Shall I tell you the real one?

DOLLY. Can if you like. (*Sits* L. *at piano.*)

MISS A. You love him. (*Moving to* DOLLY.)

DOLLY (*laughing nervously*). Guess again; 'tain't my line!

MISS A. You love him! Bah! you can't deceive me! I've seen it from the start! I tell you, you love him.

DOLLY (*turns and faces* MISS AGATHA; *after a pause*). Yes, you're right. I love Dickie Hook, there! I know I'm a fool.

MISS A. (*laughing grimly, moving towards door* R.I.E.). Yes, I'm afraid you're another of 'em. (*Stopping at chair, tapping* HOOK *on shoulder with lorgnettes.*) Why, here's this person. (*Severely.*) Have you been eavesdropping?

HOOK. Oh, no; sound asleep.

MISS A. Oh, indeed, then you'll excuse me again.

HOOK (*looking towards* DOLLY). Certainly; I don't need any entertaining, thanks.

(*Exit* MISS AGATHA R.I.E.)

(HOOK *and* DOLLY *look at each other; pause.*)

DOLLY (*nervously, in a rush*). Of course, you quite understand, Dickie, I didn't mean a word of what you overheard just now; it was only—only a kind of a joke.

HOOK. Oh, of course not; only a sort of a kind of a joke.

DOLLY (*with a sigh of relief*). Then that's all right. What's the news? (*Goes to him.*) Past the post yet?

HOOK. Glorious news, Dolly.

DOLLY. What, she has——?

HOOK. Yes, she has taken Kit back. (*Goes up* L. *of table; leads her to window and points off.*)

DOLLY (*crosses* R.C., *delighted*). But what are you going to do?

HOOK. That question again. (*To* DOLLY.) Well, I thought of asking you to marry me.

DOLLY. Look here, Dickie, a joke's a joke, but—— (*Comes down* C.)

HOOK. Yes, a joke's a joke; but this is dead earnest.

DOLLY. But, Dickie, you loved Madge.

HOOK. I did love her, I won't lie to you, Dolly; but I reckon I've come to my senses.

DOLLY. You want to marry me?

HOOK. I'll do my best to make you happy. I'm awfully rough, you know.

DOLLY. Well, somebody said I was as elegant as a fishwife.

HOOK. I'll punch his head. Well, Dolly, is it a bargain.

(DOLLY *comes to* HOOK; *he seizes her hands.*)

(*Taking her arm.*) Let's have a smoke in the garden.

CURTAIN.

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